



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

P.S. 140 Nathan Straus

M140

**123 Ridge Street
Manhattan
NY10002**

Principal: Esteban Barrientos

Dates of review: January 7-8, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 140 Nathan Straus is a K-8 school with 393 students from pre-k through grade 8. The school population comprises 12.7% Black, 78.9% Hispanic, 2.5% White, and 5.6% Asian students. The student body includes 13.5% English language learners and 32.1% special education students. Boys account for 50.6% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49.4%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Curricula and academic tasks are well planned and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) which promote improved college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - With consistent support from a Lit Life consultant, teachers across grades thoughtfully supplement a range of literacy units from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and Core Knowledge. All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are offered multiple opportunities to read a variety of challenging texts, pursue incentives and skill development through the 100 Book Challenge, and write in different genres, thus building stamina in reading and writing and integrating the CCLS instructional shifts. For example, students have access to challenging classwork and rigorous assignments, such as fifth grade students being asked to review independent novels and create three-dimensional depictions of their favorite scene, or design informational brochures about animals of the rain forest. In middle school, students pursue exit projects in science and social studies to demonstrate mastery and ownership of learning, with an additional 20% of those students challenged to meet even higher standards by preparing for high school science Regents exam. As a result, through their focus on content standards that align with CCLS, teachers ensure curricula and tasks that offer all students opportunities to achieve strong academic progress and readiness for high school and beyond.
- Organizational decision-making strengthens the learning environment for students and provides a variety of structures needed to support continued school improvement. (1.3)
 - School leaders make strategic decisions and implement operational systems very effectively in support of school improvement. For example, administrators engage external partnerships, such as Go Project and New York Cares, to provide individualized instruction and beautify the building. Despite budget reductions, teachers received stipends this year to refresh classroom libraries, which honored teachers as decision makers and set expectations for enriched reading materials in each classroom. Furthermore, school leaders recognize the need for increasing independence of middle school students, so schedules for all seventh and eighth grade students include twice weekly advisory group meetings and three cycles of electives which then reinforce social-emotional development and maturity of upper grade students, thus promoting college and career readiness. Finally, school leaders set high standards for hiring and teacher supervision with careful recruitment, selection, and assignment of all teachers. School administrators have removed ineffective teachers, who were primarily working with students with disabilities, and replaced them with more effective teachers. As a result, more students benefit from improved teaching practices, as evidenced by high levels of academic progress achieved by lowest third students in New York State English language arts and math assessments.

- Teachers assess student learning effectively, which leads to targeted interventions and instructional planning that address students' diverse learning needs. (2.2)
 - Teachers maintain consistent running records, conference notes, teacher-created assessments, and performance tasks, as ways of gauging students' progress across all subjects. Additionally, teachers use rubrics wisely to guide and evaluate students' writing pieces with specific feedback given as "glow" and "grow" comments. Parents state that they know how their child is learning and achieving beyond quarterly report cards through frequent communication with teachers, progress reports, and the introduction of an on-line grade book called TeacherEase in the middle school. With only one class per elementary grade and then bridge special education classes spanning several grades, the school's approach to common assessments involves pairing teachers of general and special education students to norm their grading of common assignments, adjust unit plans based on students' learning gaps, and maximize the use of the morning extended day session for small group instruction. Furthermore, teachers review student work products, such as document-based history essays by seventh grade students, against grade-level exemplars in the Common Core Library to strengthen validity of grading. These practices result in ongoing sharing of feedback about student progress and use of that feedback to inform curricula and instructional adjustments that enhance learning.
- School leaders routinely observe classroom teaching and provide constructive and timely feedback that supports improved teaching practices. (4.1)
 - Administrators prioritize the regular observation and development of teaching practices by committing time, expertise and resources, to cycles of formal and informal classroom visits that result in constructive feedback. As a result, school leaders and teachers embrace use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching through weekly professional development on Wednesday mornings and far more frequent visits in classrooms. Within twenty-four hours of classroom observations, teachers receive both verbal and written feedback about strengths of the lesson and specific next steps for improvement. This immediacy of meaningful feedback has led, for example, to improved instructional planning across classrooms and a shared sense of urgency, described by all stakeholders, about higher academic expectations. New teachers receive further support from modeling of lessons by the Lit Life staff developer and intervisitations with colleagues which, according to the teachers interviewed, has strengthened consistency of effective teaching practices.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend teaching practices to consistently engage students with challenging tasks, in student-centered environments which motivate all learners to participate fully in learning experiences across classrooms. (1.2)
 - Although students identify examples of interesting and challenging assignments, including writing persuasive letters to school administrators or a proposal to the New York City mayor, there are several teacher-directed classes where questioning goes back-and-forth between teacher and students, limiting the use of peer to peer discussions to deepen

learning across the room. In addition, teachers use technology equipment, such as Smartboards, to some extent during lessons and almost all students are eager to participate, yet individual students are often unable to answer why their topic or learning is important or how it relates to curriculum. Further, students' work products are mostly written, with fewer opportunities for debates, project designs, or PowerPoint presentations, which then limit the full range of student thinking and engagement in learning.

- Promote teacher leadership further by committing additional resources to teacher teams and faculty collaboration across all disciplines. (4.2)
 - All elementary school teachers participate in a robust literacy teacher team that is facilitated weekly by a Lit Life consultant. Together, they look closely at students' written work, reading performance, and their own teaching plans. Moreover, teachers review units of study critically to ensure thoughtful alignment to CCLS. Similarly, all middle school teachers collaborate productively in structured grade level meetings. However, while teachers note that they receive strong and tailored support in planning literacy instruction, they lack sufficient support, professional development, and oversight in math, from pre-k to grade eight. For example, there is no formalized math teacher team that mirrors the literacy team. Instead, a small group of teachers meets voluntarily twice a month after school to plan and share resources for math instruction. Led by a respected middle school math teacher, this quasi-math team models well the kind of collaboration, collegiality, and professional growth that all teachers need to further develop their teaching practices. The limited reach of this pioneering group, coupled with general concerns about a top-down style of administrative leadership voiced by a number of teachers, results in varied experiences by teachers with regard to team collaboration and shared decision making, and contributes to missed opportunities to maximize staff and student achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: PS 140 Nathan Straus	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X					
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed