



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**J.H.S. 143 Eleanor Roosevelt**

**Junior High School M143**

**511 West 182nd Street  
Manhattan  
NY, NY 10033**

**Principal: Lakisha Mcdaniel Luke**

**Dates of review: Feb 25-26, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Elsa Nunez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

J.H.S. 143 Eleanor Roosevelt is a junior high school with 446 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 96% Hispanic and 3% White students. The student body includes 47% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.5%.

### Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Effective decisions regarding organization and use of resources support school goals in order to meet the academic and social needs of students. (1.3)
  - The school has focused its technological and staffing resources to meet student needs and support school goals around developing students' writing skills. Technology upgrades include six laptop carts, document cameras, clickers and additional SmartBoards to increase student engagement. iPads have also been purchased for teachers to facilitate documentation of student conferences. To meet the individual needs of students, the school has also purchased technology programs such as myON and Achieve 3000, web based reading programs that allow students to access on line books at home and that also assess reading proficiency. The principal has identified grade advisors for each grade in order to support the needs of students. At-risk students are provided with targeted instruction as part of academic interventions sessions during the extended day, Title III programs for English language learners and Saturday academy programs. Full time English language arts and math coaches provide support to develop the implementation of coherent instructional strategies across classrooms. The schedule allows teachers to meet for five periods a week to collaboratively review student achievement data in order to adjust instructional plans. Teachers meet on grade level teams and horizontal content area teams to ensure coherence and relevance of topics taught across content areas. The schedule allows content area teachers double period blocks to provide sufficient time for teachers to explore concepts deeply. The principal meets weekly with instructional coaches to discuss instructional initiatives, curricular plans and student achievement data that enables coaches to provide guidance to teacher teams to assure that plans align to school goals of improving student writing by citing textual evidence to support claims and increasing teacher use of data to develop instructional plans. The principal shared that teacher collaboration has improved, and the focus of conversations is now about instruction resulting in a shift from "I" to "we". The collective work of teacher teams on developing strategies to further develop student writing has resulted in an increase in the volume of student writing across all content areas as evidenced by a review of student work.
- The school has established data based goals that are evident across planning documents that drive school improvements efforts. (3.1)
  - School goals focus on developing student writing skills across all subject areas to improve students' abilities to clearly express understanding of content. Teachers concentrate on assuring that students are able to cite textual evidence to support an argument or thesis and relate ideas in a coherent manner. Improving teacher questioning and discussion techniques is another major instructional focus to promote higher order thinking skills. The school also aims to foster instruction that is student centered, allowing students to engage in productive struggle that encourages them to do the "heavy lifting" during lessons. Teachers and teacher teams develop plans to improve

writing and vocabulary development in order to improve student comprehension of complex texts that support schools goals and to develop consistency across grades. Goals are reviewed by administrators and coaches to inform professional development plans and monitor progress. Teachers also receive support by attending sessions provided by consultants and the Network to deepen understanding of the curriculum and instructional practices. Administrators review student work, observation reports and feedback resulting from professional development sessions to gauge progress. School efforts to support goals have resulted in the grouping of students for instruction based on achievement results as well as opportunities for students to collaboratively discuss and complete tasks with peers. This has helped to increase student ownership of the learning process and improve engagement, as evidenced by discussions with students and classroom observations.

- The principal collaboratively engages with other administrators and key personnel in the analysis of feedback provided to teachers, student work products and feedback from teacher team meetings to develop school goals and priorities. For example, teachers communicated to the principal that multiple choice midterm exams did not present a clear picture of student understanding of key concepts. As a result, performance tasks are now administered to students during midterm assessment periods to gauge student understanding. Streamlining the quantity of data sources used was also recommended by teachers in order to establish fewer benchmarks that would offer valuable data to track student progress and inform curricular plans. Goals and priorities are presented to the School Leadership Team for input and alignment to the school's budget. In coming sixth grade students and their families are invited to an orientation session prior to entering in September, in order to present school curricula, goals and expectations for student achievement. An open house at the beginning of the school year provides an opportunity for staff to share instructional plans and goals for the school year with families and students. Teachers also send home the syllabi for courses to support parents in understanding what students are expected to learn. A monthly calendar is also sent home to alert parents of key dates and school events to encourage increased involvement. During interviews with parents, they indicated that they are well informed regarding school programs and are offered valuable ideas on how to support their children, especially to the parents of English language learners.
- The principal communicates high expectations for student achievement to students, staff and families in order to elevate student outcomes. (3.4)
  - The principal wants the school to be a home away from home for students and staff. She also wants to create an environment that welcomes students while also engaging students in rigorous Common Core aligned curricula in order to prepare students for success in college and careers. The school community has engaged in discussions and activities to identify what skills graduates of the school should know and be able in order to inform school improvement efforts. The school promotes research, Cornell note taking and student discussion in order to push students thinking and to align middle school experience to college expectations. Field trips to colleges have been organized to enable students to develop a vision that attending college is an attainable goal for all. Expectations are relayed to

students via a student handbook that outlines school expectations and are reinforced daily by teachers and administrators. Parents are made aware of and provided with ideas on how to support their children in meeting expectations through parent workshops, parent association meetings and newsletters to families. Parents are kept abreast of student progress through Jupiter Grades, the school's online grading system, progress reports and weekly text messages. The school reviews access reports that indicate which parents have logged in to the Jupiter Grade reporting system in order to reach out to parents who have not and offer support accessing the system. As a result, during parent interviews, parents expressed that the school sets rigorous expectations that prepare students for continued success in high school and college.

## What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the standards based curricula implemented across classrooms consistently engage all students in rigorous and challenging experiences in order to improve student performance. (1.1)
  - School leaders promote the development of tasks that are engaging, with built-in entry points and that require students to think deeply about content and apply it to real world situations. The principal expects teachers to develop tasks that incorporate these strategies and use open ended questions to assure that all students are engaged in rigorous tasks and higher thinking skills. However, in the majority of lessons observed, teachers asked students to list details or facts learned. The school believes that student engagement is essential in deep understanding of concepts, consequently student discussion is promoted. Evident across classrooms are students grouped for instruction, but the tasks assigned are generally not rigorous and too much time is allotted for discussion and completion of tasks; as a result, students become disengaged. Teacher teams indicated that they dedicate time to the analysis of student work to surface trends in student achievement in order to make curricular revisions. Achievement trends also provide insight into necessary scaffolds to support English language learners, special needs students and struggling students. Teachers provide students with a variety of scaffolds such as graphic organizers with different levels of support, sentence stems, leveled texts and articles and parallel books in Spanish to enable all students access to content. Teachers are also encouraged to look beyond actual resources within the school by using technology to augment available sources of information used to support content. However, these strategies are not yet consistently implemented across classrooms and, as a result, not all students have a deep comprehension of key concepts in required texts or how to complete assignments, as evidenced by classroom observations and interviews with students.
- Further develop teacher pedagogy to promote the implementation of a variety of instructional strategies to support the needs of all students and to maximize learning opportunities across classrooms. (1.2)
  - Strategies espoused by the school to support student learning include explicit teaching of strategies, using data to identify specific skills needed by individual or groups of students to enable

movement to the next level, and providing students with alternative ways to demonstrate understanding. The administration has developed an observation template outlining these instructional expectations that are aligned to the Danielson Framework to gather low inference classroom level data to inform professional development plans. Coaches develop year-long professional development calendars based on analysis of goals established by teachers and feedback provided by school leaders in order to improve pedagogical practices. During teacher interviews, teachers indicate that they use formative data to group students based on identified areas to provide explicit support. Furthermore, teachers implement flexible grouping to allow students to move between groups as skills are mastered. In most classes students worked in groups, however tasks were not sufficiently differentiated to address the needs of subgroups of students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Teacher questioning and discussion was generally geared toward individual students, limiting engagement by other students in class. The principal shared that in an effort to increase engagement, results of student interest survey are used to align scope and sequence to students' interests. The use of graphic organizers, explicit teaching of content, language objectives and parallel books in Spanish are also used to promote access to content and engagement of students. Student debate, with a focus on science and social studies content, in order to support the oral language development of students, especially English language learners. Students are expected to take a position around a topic, defend that position both orally and in writing using evidence from sources read. Evidence of sentence starters or accountable talk prompts to support students in engagement in text-based discussion is evident in some classrooms. However, these practices are not yet standard school-wide and student led discussions are not yet evident across classrooms. As a result, not all students benefit from school efforts to provide multiple entry points to skills and content being taught.

- Refine the use of formative and summative assessments to allow teachers and teacher teams to identify trends in student achievement in order to inform instructional and curricular decisions. (2.2)
  - The school uses a variety of data sources to gauge student progress. Review of teacher data binders indicate that teachers review student performance data from performance assessments, New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, New Y state standardized exams, item analysis and results of performance tasks, among other sources. Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics, with varying criteria, to provide feedback and to assess student work. The school has established a grading policy that is evident across classrooms; however, review of student work portfolios demonstrates that not all work is graded or provided with clear, explicit feedback that students can use to improve work products. The math curriculum has embedded assessments that allow teachers to norm outcomes across grades. However, the school has yet to adopt a common grade level rubric to gauge student progress in literacy across grades. Teacher teams indicate that formative and summative data inform curricular revisions based on student achievement. Data review indicates that the school took a dramatic drop in performance in both literacy and math, which surfaced a need to increase the complexity of content taught across grades. For example, books, such as *The Diary of Ann Frank*, that were part of the eighth grade

curriculum are now taught in the sixth grade. Also, the school's newly adopted math curriculum that requires that students gain deep understanding of core concepts supports the school goal of increasing the rigor of what is taught to better prepare students for standardized exams. However, the school has yet to standardize the use of data across grades to enable teachers to use a common lens when discussing student performance or to strategically plan school improvement efforts based on common expectations. In addition, analysis of student work is still not fully grounded in common grade level rubrics and, as a result, the rigor of tasks and instructional strategies does not consistently challenge all students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: J.H.S. 143 Eleanor Roosevelt	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score		X		

### Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly...	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

To what extent does the school...	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

To what extent does the school...	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
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