



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

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

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The Yorkville Community School**

**Elementary School M151**

**421 East 88<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10128**

**Principal: Samantha Kaplan**

**Dates of review: March 3 & 5, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Sara P. Feliz**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Yorkville Community School is an elementary school with 483 students from kindergarten through grade 4. The school population comprises 12% Black, 26% Hispanic, 50% White, 8% Asian, and 4% multi-racial students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school employs a well-tailored, standards-aligned curriculum that is underpinned by experiential learning and results in high-quality student writing. (1.1)
  - Across grades, the school's literacy curriculum is comprised of four, grade-specific, interdisciplinary units which are clearly driven by shared learning experiences in science and social studies and aligned with the Common Core (CCLS) instructional shifts. The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) greatly influences literacy work throughout the school as teachers consistently utilize pure Teachers College reading units and accompanying assessments to drive students' progress with reading. In writing, although the full complement of TCRWP units is not utilized by the school, the TCRWP core beliefs about gathering information and process writing comprise the foundation of all in-house thematic units, which result in a rich balance of published non-fiction and narrative writing pieces. More remarkable, however, is the high level of interest in, awareness of and interaction with the local community which these units instill in students. Math curriculum planning is also highly noteworthy as the school's assistant principal leads teachers across grades in using a variety of resources, including TERC Investigations and Math in the City, to generate comprehensive units which build on the use of models while concurrently developing student fluency with computation. As a result of these fortified math resources, student outcomes on in-class, end-of-unit assessments and other school-wide periodic measures demonstrate continued progress and mastery of skills.
  - In addition to the culminating work in curriculum development which is done during year-end planning, all teachers, including long-term substitutes, have a great hand in mapping and revising the current interdisciplinary and math units of study throughout the school year. During weekly meetings, teams analyze and discuss a wealth of assorted student data, including outcomes on Fountas and Pinnell running records, writing samples from research writing and math assessments. In addition, teachers utilize their observations from "kid watching", which depict specific student behaviors exhibited during the learning process, to complement the outcomes data. Teams then use this plethora of data to discuss the outcomes of a diverse sample of students, including students with disabilities and second language learners, in order to surface trends in learning. As a result of these ongoing dialogues, grade teams are empowered to celebrate the strengths of the written curriculum, recognize specific areas where groups of students continue to struggle, and revise maps and units to include additional resources and strategies in real time to address the immediate challenges exhibited by students.
- Across grades, teachers work diligently to differentiate lessons and resources, affording all students access to the curriculum so that everyone achieves academic and personal success. (1.2)

- Centered on the common belief that learning is a social process, all classrooms effectively use the workshop approach to teaching, reserving the greatest amount of time during each lesson for independent, paired interaction between students. During these self-regulated opportunities for exploration, the vast majority of students are strategically grouped and assigned different tasks and resources, centered on a common teaching point, to meet them where they are cognitively with the content and skill at hand. Classrooms across grades serve as print-rich instructional tools filled with scaffolds, such as subject-specific word walls, process charts, assorted graphic organizers and other visual aids, which provide students supplemental access to the learning material while concurrently fostering independence from the teacher. Individualized conferencing is a premier practice of the school through which all teachers exercise their high-quality questioning techniques to adeptly gain insights into student thinking, and sometimes, misconceptions in their learning process. Consequently, small groups are assembled, based on conference notes and periodic assessment data, so that teachers may engage students in targeted modelling and guided discussions to further nurture skill development. As a result of the school's position on socialized learning, students become equipped to manifest the expectations of the CCLS through continued high quality writing, such as the social studies-based expert books in grade 3 and the historical fiction pieces of grade 4 students as well as the interactive charts and shared math problem solutions observed across grades.
- The principal is highly adept at maximizing human resources and time to promote ongoing adult and student learning, resulting in continued progress toward goals across the school community. (1.3)
  - The principal has been exceptionally thoughtful in maximizing the school's headcount and weekly schedule. In particular, administration has made certain to hire a great deal of dual-certified teachers, thereby increasing the versatility of staff to assist both general education and students with special needs. Additionally, the principal has developed the practice of moving teachers to different grades during the course of their tenure, resulting in a non-sedentary culture at the school. This practice also reveals the multiple strengths of teachers, enabling administration to seek out the best matches for student placement in classes as well as optimal teacher team configuration. To further support teacher teaming, programming has been structured so that teachers have several opportunities to meet weekly with each other or administrators in order to analyze student work, evaluate and revise curriculum and instructional strategies, and/or discuss their professional needs. Consequently, as per interim assessments, the vast majority of students demonstrate steady progress stemming from the specialized support teachers are equipped to provide them during regular classroom instruction, academic intervention sessions and extended day opportunities that fortify literacy and math skills.
- Administrators and teachers have well-rooted structures in place to monitor student content and skills mastery so that individual needs are addressed in real time, leading to steady progress in literacy and math across grades. (2.2)

- In classrooms, teachers consistently employ multiple checks for understanding which serve to gauge student mastery of content knowledge and skills acquisition across subject areas on a daily basis. These in-class assessments include: individualized conferences with students, self-assessment checklists, mid-workshop interruptions, student-to-student discussions, post-lesson group shares and the use of four-point rubrics. On a broader scale, at periodic intervals throughout the year, the school systematically engages in assessment cycles during which Teachers College Assessment Pro gauges student progress with reading. Similarly, math achievement is measured through a balance of staff-generated math assessments in kindergarten through second grade and Acuity assessments in grades three and four. Teachers and administrators then organize the assorted data so that it becomes a powerfully useful resource in forward planning for both small groups of students and the school at large. The daily class data is reviewed by individual teachers as well as teacher teams in order to surface trends of items and skills which require re-teaching or shifts in strategies and resources to scaffold student learning. The results of the school-wide interim assessments are compiled onto CCLS-aligned trackers, in the form of spreadsheets, which are organized by class, providing administration and the school's data specialist a bird's eye pulse check on school's overall movement in literacy and math. As a result of this system, the principal is able to make precise, data-informed decisions regarding student participation in academic intervention and enrichment programs. The data also informs direct dialogue between administration and teams of teachers regarding grade-specific trends and needs so that curriculum and instruction are revised to enhance continued student success. In particular, these conversations result in fortified planning for strategic grouping and intensified guided reading experiences for students which propel student achievement in English language arts and math.
- All teachers benefit from a sustained balance of supervision and support that propels a common understanding of the intricacies and effective practices of teaching, resulting in continual student progress across classrooms. (4.1)
  - At the onset of the school year, administrators and teachers collectively looked at student work vis-à-vis the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the CCLS in order to gain a normed perspective of the school's high expectations for academic achievement. Also, newer teachers met weekly with the assistant principal to become fully acclimated to the school's structures and available resources. Since then, the principal and assistant principal have co-supervised all teachers, providing immediate, actionable feedback either through ongoing conversation or in writing. More importantly, the administrators have used a rotation approach to gauge teacher effectiveness, positioning both leaders to share the responsibility of observing teachers at different times to later discuss their noticings and wonderings. This cross-pollination of perspectives has been pivotal as the school leaders evaluate the strides made by individual and groups of teachers regarding the school-wide goal of embedding high-quality, student-centered discussions into daily instruction. Further, the comparative analyses of the administrators has greatly influenced the way in-house mentors and contracted staff developers for literacy and math are matched to the needs of teachers through a tiered model. As a result of the sustained cycle of supervision and support, a great

proportion of the teachers at the school demonstrate highly effective classroom management structures, highly effective planning skills, and effective instructional practices in alignment with their individualized professional goals which are refined, as needed, throughout the year. Moreover, this structure to maximize adult capacity has resulted in continual improvement in students' academic vocabulary across subject areas, as per inter-student discussions and writing pieces.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Further develop the protocols driving teacher team work so that, across all grades, the inquiry component is consistently driven by deep discussions around student work which afford all participants a contributing voice. (4.2)
  - The school has structured a two-pronged approach to inquiry work which engages all teachers across the school with analyzing student work for very distinct purposes. Each grade team, for example, meets weekly to discuss student work, analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the work and consequently sharing potential resources and strategies that bridge the identified learning gaps for students, including students with disabilities and second language learners. The second vein of inquiry work runs across the vertical body of the school, allowing for teachers of mixed grades to select inquiry topics which align with their respective professional development plans. This stream of inquiry work is driven by a unique essential question for each small group, and the topics range from developing number sense to strengthening conferring and word study lessons. That said, all teachers across the school certainly are assigned to engage in inquiry work, and student work is, in fact, used as the catalyst for developing teacher capacity and generating improved instructional resources and strategies. However, at this time, the school does not yet demonstrate that the protocols in place provide equity of voice to teachers in all grade teams. As a result, on occasion, the great dialogue of teams is dominated by a select few, constraining other teachers into silent partners instead of key players in decision making.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Yorkville Community School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?				<b>X</b>			
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>