

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The Dyckman Valley School**

**M152**

**93 Nagle Street  
New York, NY 10040**

**Principal: Mrs. J. Pietri**

**Dates of review: October 21-22, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Dyckman Valley is an elementary school with 676 students from Pre-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 96% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 35% English language learners and 8% 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 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders and staff develop and align their curricula to selected key standards to promote a range of learning experiences that cognitively engages students. (1.1)
  - The school's curriculum map provides a coherent overview of the curricula, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) while integrating the 2013-2014 Citywide instructional Expectations (CIE) and instructional shifts. The school also utilizes the current New York State (NYS) scope and sequence to build content knowledge for their students through reading of informational text. Planning is evident in curriculum maps across grades and results in teachers engaging students in a robust curriculum that develops critical thinking skills and content knowledge through meaningful units of study in social studies and science. The school has made purposeful decisions, based on past student performance on both state and school-based benchmark assessments including the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA 2), to focus on information and understanding, critical analysis and evaluation, and literary response and expression as key standards in English Language Arts (ELA). In mathematics, the key standards are number sense and operations, measurement, and geometry. This targeted focus is the basis for grade level teacher team meetings, including interdisciplinary teachers who collaborate to ensure there is coherence across the school in order to promote college and career readiness.
  - Teachers design and review learning opportunities to strengthen the connections between vocabulary development, reading and writing, as well as content knowledge. Across classes visited, including self-contained and Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes, there is evidence of the CCLS shifts, specifically text-based answers, vocabulary use and writing from different sources. Lesson plans are modified to meet each child's entry point. Common language is used among staff and the modeling of this practice ensures students are building their ELA academic vocabulary as evidenced in their classroom discussions. This has resulted in a higher level of student questioning and engagement on tasks aligned to subject matter. During the 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team meeting, a teacher stated "this focus has resulted in increased quality of student discussion and writing assignments around text".
- Teaching practices across the school reflect a coherent set of beliefs that promotes high levels of student thinking and engagement in appropriately challenging tasks. (1.2)
  - The school community believes students learn best by being engaged in purposeful and productive lessons that directly relate to the students' lives. Lessons include opportunities for students to engage in creative and valuable conversation based on the text they are reading or the problem they are solving in mathematics and/or science. Across

classrooms, there was evidence of rigor in learning as evidenced by students' participation in a discussion in small groups in response to the teacher posed question "How did the young girl know there was danger ahead"? The focus of the lesson was to identify "signal words" within the story which was modeled by the teacher for students. The students were then given the opportunity to explain their thought processes and defend their work resulting in high levels of student engagement and critical thinking skills. In addition, the school uses the workshop model in all classes with opportunities for students to engage in guided and independent practice. Multiple entry points to lessons and tasks are provided for all learners through the use of technology, leveled texts, visual aids, manipulatives and graphic organizers. During a third grade bilingual writing lesson students were learning about multiple definitions of words. Students were asked to look at the picture in their reading book and provide the definition of the word "fan" as signified in the story. The school also utilizes the Frayer Model which supports vocabulary development to help students demonstrate comprehension and communicate specific and technical language for content-area learning. This methodology helps students tap into their prior knowledge and experiences to understand ideas and vocabulary. Furthermore, students list essentials, examples, nonessentials and nonexamples of a particular word. During the small group meeting, students were able to verbalize how the Frayer Model helped them learn new vocabulary words thus providing opportunities for high levels of thinking and participation.

- School leaders make deliberate and strategic organizational decisions around the use of resources, scheduling, staff and partnerships to ensure ongoing growth for all community members. (1.3)
  - All resources are aligned to the school's overarching goals and key priorities. Through strategic budgeting and programming, the principal has added a math coach, a literacy coach, an "F" status librarian, and a theater teacher to support creative student writing and speaking. In all classes observed, the impact of the coaches and cluster teachers was evident in the familiarity students had with routines such as their ability to ask their peers thought provoking questions about content, and their ability to cite references in the text as support for their statements. The school has used its own funds to purchase additional SmartBoards and laptop carts. Furthermore, the school uses per-session funds to support their action plan that includes having teachers plan together to continue and deepen the work begun last year that includes the implementation of six units of study that are aligned to the CCLS, CIE, reading program Journeys, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, and the New York City Instructional Materials Rubric. Additionally, the school has provided all students with opportunities through writing, music, art and in addition, ballroom dancing for fifth graders, to nurture self-discovery, which has resulted in increased enthusiasm toward school activities that foster creativity and a sense of value. Professional development that explicitly addresses the CCLS, the creation of higher order thinking questions and tasks across all content areas ensure the engagement of all students in challenging tasks. Staff time is also structured so that teachers are given the opportunity to conduct inter-visitations in the areas of questioning, that has resulted in consistency in pedagogical practices.

- Professional collaborations continuously strengthen cohesive curricula and instructional practices ensuring a shared commitment to teacher growth and student progress. (4.2)
  - All teachers are active members of collaborative teams that focus on integrating instructional shifts uniformly into instruction across the school as outlined in the CIE and the CCLS. Team members, using consistent protocols where staff rotates as lead presenters or facilitators, review student writing pieces generated prior to instruction on a unit of study and again at the conclusion of the unit. Student thinking and work products are reviewed and measured to determine curriculum adjustments and teaching strategies. Student work samples at the end of the unit demonstrate consistent increases in writing stamina, the use of key vocabulary in content areas and the inclusion of more supporting details as measured by CCLS aligned rubric. Furthermore, teachers discuss the implementation of instructional strategies and how lessons are differentiated to include access for all students. Additionally, another component of teacher team meetings is focused on the “rigor” of the task and the level of questioning used. As a result, collaborative team work guarantees that cohesive practices are embedded throughout the school as well as improved professional practice through teacher support of one another.

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

- Further refine and extend the school’s approach to culture building and social-emotional support such that the tone of the school is generally respectful and the school works toward addressing areas of need. (1.4)
  - There is a school-wide focus on building a culture of positive supports throughout the school and in all classrooms. The school is supportive of students and staff who work together to create calm, respectful, and orderly environment for learning to take place. Data related to social-emotional growth taken from the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORs) show a decrease in Level 1-5 incidents from (104) during school year 2011-2012 to (58) during school year 2012-2013. The drop in Principal suspensions went from (28) during school year 2011-2012 to (18) during school year 2012-2013. School leaders stress a team approach and expect that all stakeholders work cohesively to support the generalization of skills across all learning environments. Students are well known by staff as a result of the teaming of staff to address concerns. During the large group student meeting, the students stated they felt safe in school and there was always an adult (teacher and/or administrator) that they could talk to about any concerns they might have. However, they also stated that there was no formal venue that allowed in students to participate in decision-making processes and committees such as student government or student council resulting in limited opportunities to engage in school improvement efforts.
- Extend assessment practices in order to continue to inform instructional decisions and provide opportunities for student self-assessment. (2.2)

- Across the school, there is a culture of data collection; administrators, teachers, and related service providers collect and use a range of formative and summative assessments. The school routinely administers pre- and post- assessments, and utilizes teacher constructed rubrics, checklists, and grading policies, which are all aligned to the school's curricula, and are used to assess students' on performance tasks in the classroom. These tools are also used to ensure that students are demonstrating the intended learning outlined in the teaching points included in instructional plans and are utilized to guide adjustments to learning as needed. The staff consistently shares student work and assessment results with their students to ensure that they are aware of their instructional next steps. Although the school's use of data helps track student progress in meeting their learning goals there are currently no self-assessment tools in place, thereby limiting students' consistent ownership of progress.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Dyckman Valley Elementary School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
<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?			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				
<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?			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				
<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?			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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed