



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Countee Cullen

Elementary School 194

**244 West 144 Street
New York
NY 10030**

Principal: Josephine Bazan

Dates of review: March 4 – 5, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Countee Cullen is an elementary school with 209 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 53% Black, 41% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 21% 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 88.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal cultivates effective partnerships and students appreciate the many supports that foster their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - The principal greets parents and students each morning, thus presenting a welcoming environment for families and visitors when they arrive at the school. In order to continue to foster the development of a positive school tone, consultants from Turnaround for Children support staff twice weekly - classroom based instructional support on Tuesdays and professional development on Thursdays, demonstrating for all faculty members, strategies to de-escalate potentially volatile situations. As evidenced by visits to classrooms, teachers and students employ the taught Kagan structures (for classroom management and engagement), which contribute to a supportive student environment. Parents stated that child safety is “taken seriously” and students who participated in the large student group meeting shared that they “feel safe” and that staff members readily provide needed assistance. The school-developed behavioral matrix emphasizes students’ positive actions such as being proactive, respectful and responsible. Class presidents from grades three to five report that they provide input on the spirit day celebrations and that there is an increase in student recognitions and awards that include rewarding students’ academic and social achievements during school assemblies and celebrating them on hallway bulletin boards. These combined efforts result in a reduction of the number of online occurrence reports, while enabling students to develop leadership skills, value individual differences and learn in an inclusive environment that is responsive to their needs.
 - One student eloquently stated that his teachers “don’t want anyone left behind.” Students appreciate that they can turn to school personnel who promptly address specific concerns. Students and families indicate that the school’s small class sizes enable every student to be well known by school faculty who help support academic growth, with tutoring and small group intervention strategies. This school year the principal has a pilot after school program geared for those students exhibiting chronic behavioral problems; the social worker works intensively with these students, teaching them positive interactive skills. Additionally, Asphalt Green supports each lunch period by teaching students to play structured games during recess. As a result, there is a noted decline in incidents during these time frames. The guidance counselor and social worker refer families to NY Foundling for additional services and ensure that identified students receive free eye glasses and/or other devices, including hearing aids to support their learning. Additionally, the Behavior Coordination Team (BCT) meets on Tuesdays to review attendance and guidance reports, to note trends and, as a result, prioritize supports for selected students. Outreach efforts result in personalized meetings, phone calls and home visits. These coordinated services presently result in healthier students who miss school less often and have increased motivational levels, as noted in student and parent meetings.

- Thoughtful organizational decisions ensure resources are aligned to support instructional goals and foster improvements in student outcomes. (1.3)
 - The principal's budgeting, coupled with input from staff members, result in the alignment of resources to the school's instructional goals which are focused on improving pedagogical practices and student outcomes. Two coaches (math and literacy) model lessons and provide classroom based support to their peers. To ensure the continuity of instruction, one first grade teacher looped with her class to second grade. The principal indicates that this is an ongoing practice and that at least one teacher is afforded this opportunity each year. The school is the recipient of a Community Service Grant, which provides additional services to students and their families. The principal wants to advance the integration of technology throughout the school so some teachers have received smart board training and some students, especially in the upper grades, are using classroom computers to research and publish end of unit essays. These efforts, aligned to the school's goals, are helping to solidify students' learning, as evidenced in their work products displayed in classrooms.
 - Prospective new teachers must interact with the hiring committee, comprised of the principal, assistant principal and selected teachers, who focus on the applicants' pedagogical practices aligned to the Common Core standards. Recent hires participated in interviews and were asked to model lessons as well as share professional artifacts, prior to being selected. The academic intervention teacher develops and reinforces specific math skills for the lowest third of students, while the coaches and English as a second language teacher provide pull-out services to identified students, with a goal focused on closing the achievement gap. This results in targeted assistance during the day and afterschool, to help prepare students for the next level. Consequently, tracking logs reflect the growth of these identified students on the most recent formative assessment results. Additionally, special education teachers share strategies, during team meetings, on how best to meet the individual needs of students. These practices not only result in a smaller student-to-teacher ratio, but are also conducive to optimal levels of personal and academic success for all students.
- School leaders support teacher development through frequent observations and feedback cycles aligned to professional development, with a focus on improving instructional practices throughout the school. (4.1)
 - Each teacher is scheduled to participate in at least three lab sites per grade band. These visits enable teachers to take low inference data and provide warm and cool feedback to their colleagues, using the Danielson framework, with a focus on Domains 2 and 3. The principal and assistant principal initially conduct formal and informal classroom visits together, in order to norm their understanding of the Danielson framework. A review of the observation calendar, logs and observation reports, shows that they provide frequent, specific, and timely feedback, with next steps for teachers to improve their pedagogy across competencies and components embedded in the framework. To support individual teachers' areas for growth, especially with regard to the school-wide focus on questioning and discussion techniques, the principal recommends

specific videos on ARIS Learn. An Advance talent coach provides professional development to staff and school administrators, on the accuracy and meaningfulness of feedback as well as the use of protocols to facilitate meetings. Administrators and teachers review student performance data and work products during team meetings. New teachers are mentored by experienced pedagogues. Teacher leaders on each grade level participate in external professional development opportunities and turn-key the information to their peers during team meetings. As a result, teachers continue to refine their pedagogical practices and exhibit knowledge of grade appropriate strategies that elicit student understanding.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve consistency of pedagogical practices across classrooms to ensure that classroom instruction and learning activities provide appropriate challenge to students in order to maximize their engagement. (1.2)
 - To meet students' needs, some teachers use scaffolding tools such as graphic organizers and manipulatives to support writing and math. For example, in a second grade Collaborative Team Teaching class (CTT), the teachers used a graphic organizer to model the use of text to support their answers, shared clear expectations of the learning objective and strategically supported small groups of students to reinforce their learning. This however, is not the practice in every class. Consequently, not all students receive the academic support necessary to accelerate their learning. At times, tasks assigned to individual and/or groups of students are not targeted to meet their needs or further challenge their thinking. Many teachers also do not yet provide lessons that allow for sufficient student engagement in higher order thinking. Consequently, some teachers' lessons miss out on demonstrating strategies to sufficiently engage students in higher order thinking so that work products and activities stretch the thinking of all learners, including students with individual education plans and those performing at the highest achievement levels.
 - Teachers are beginning to ask open ended questions and share conversation stems with students in order to foster discussion. In some classes they also encourage students to question and provide feedback to each other. For example, in a fifth grade classroom, students peer edited each other's work and shared feedback such as, "you need to use more quotes" or "back up your sentence with evidence." Students used multiple sources, persisted in the face of difficulty, defended their answers, and built on each other's thoughts and ideas, as the teacher posed higher order questions. However, these practices are not consistent, as in many classrooms, students are not required to expand their answers and teachers do not identify thoughtful student responses in order to foster conversations. As such, questions and answers are most often between teacher and an individual student. This results in uneven levels of student thinking and participation across classrooms.
- Promote greater alignment of assessment practices to standards and tasks so that teachers can accurately gauge student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of their curricular and instructional decisions. (2.2)

- Data charts are displayed in classrooms and teachers use data from common grade- level assessments, including performance tasks, beginning and end of unit assessments and Fountas and Pinnell running records, to set targets and evaluate student growth. During planning meetings, teachers are exposed to utilizing protocols to analyze student work products. During the team meetings teachers discussed specific findings. While they found that students responded to the written task, they noted that the identified students lacked specific organizational writing skills. Thus far, their approach is limited to identifying the needs of individual students. Teachers are at the beginning stages of noting class and/or grade trends. Additionally, some teachers are not utilizing the data to make immediate instructional adaptations. As such, data is not consistently monitored, thus preventing teachers from getting a well-defined picture of all students' progress toward established goals.
- In a third grade collaborative team teaching classroom, the teachers worked with small groups of students and circulated to assess students' understanding of math concepts. The teachers encouraged students to explain varied strategies used and, based on student responses, called specific students to the rug to thoughtfully re-teach in order to address students' misunderstandings. Both teachers utilized varied strategies and technological tools, including the smart board and iPad, to help reinforce conceptual understanding. However, this level of monitoring for student comprehension is not the norm across grades and classrooms. Although teachers repeatedly ask questions, many do not analyze student responses as a check for understanding. This limits teachers in providing targeted feedback to students to maximize their learning and hinders students' understanding of taught concepts.
- Expand the process of the refinement of the standards aligned curricula across all grades and subject areas, in order to build coherence and emphasize rigorous skills that prepare students for the next level. (1.1)
 - Teachers are making adjustments to the English language arts curriculum in order to further align writing tasks to the reading units of study. The principal is also supporting teachers with roll-out of the new math curriculum, with a focus on problem solving and conceptual understanding, in alignment to the instructional shifts in mathematics. However, these practices are not yet evident across all grades and subjects. Additionally, there is limited evidence of social studies and science units across classes and grades. In both content areas, students are not frequently immersed in units across multiple texts and tasks are not well aligned to the teaching point. At times, developed tasks lack rigor and alignment to State standards and students' work products do not demonstrate the use of varied texts and research methodology. For example, the learning objective of a social studies lesson required students to listen to a story about a supermarket and draw a picture with a label and caption. This task rates at a low level on the rigor matrix and does not reflect high level rigorous expectations. As such, performance based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning, do not extend across all content areas, thus precluding students from achieving at even higher levels than they currently attain.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Countee Cullen	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