



**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. 325

Elementary 06M325

**500 WEST 138 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10031**

Principal: Gary H. Cruz

Dates of review: Jan 23 - 24, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Nunez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 325 is an Elementary school with 283 students from 0K through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 91% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 39% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Across classrooms, teachers implement standards based curricula in order to engage and challenge all students to improve academic outcomes. (1.1)
 - Based on analysis of data, and recommendations made by the New York State Department of Education, the school began implementing Expeditionary Learning last year to provide students with a Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) based curriculum. At the beginning of this school year, the school chose to implement Core Knowledge in grades kindergarten to second and Expeditionary Learning for grades three to five to provide all students with a standards based curriculum in English language arts. All grades use GoMath in order to prepare students for grade level standards. The school has done extensive work in analyzing the curricula in order to make adjustments that meet the needs of students. Teachers review curriculum maps, using student achievement data to assure that skills required to meet grade level standards are addressed. Analysis of the school's curriculum surfaced the need to augment the focus on writing. Math teachers adjust the pacing and tasks within the GoMath curriculum to assure access by all students. In order to support teachers in developing higher order thinking skills, the school has done extensive work analyzing Danielson's Framework and aligning components to the instructional expectations. The school promotes higher order thinking skills by requiring teachers to plan questions at vary levels for all lessons. Lesson plans demonstrate that teachers plan tasks in literacy that requires students to cite evidence from texts in order to support arguments or theories. Math tasks require students to develop deep understanding of core concepts in order to be prepared for grade level standards. As a result of the school's adoption of common core aligned curricula, there is evidence of coherent lesson planning across grades to provide students with standards based instruction.
- The principal's strategic decisions regarding organization and use of resources support the school's goals of meeting the social and academic needs of students. (1.3)
 - The principal shared that a focus for this school year has been to provide students with targeted instruction in small groups to assure progress. The principal prioritized the allocation of funds to hire additional staff to provide push in support during classroom instruction. After-school tutorial programs provide additional instruction to students in grades one through five in English language arts, math and English as a second language. This school year, additional funds were allocated for the after school tutorial program to maximize efforts before students have to take standardized exams. The principal has assigned the most experienced teachers to the students who have the greatest academic needs in order to ensure that progress is made on standardized exams. The principal has departmentalized classes in the upper grades, so that teachers teach within areas of expertise to better support students in acquiring deep understanding of content. The school employs three part-time coaches that teach part of the day and support teachers for the remainder of the day. The effective use of personnel and allocation of funds to provide students with small group instruction both during the

school day and in the afterschool tutorial program has enabled teachers to support students in producing work aligned to grade level standards as evidenced by review of portfolios.

- When developing the school's organization, the principal reviews student achievement data, as well as the levels of experience and expertise among the staff to make teaching assignments. The most experienced and skilled teachers are placed with the students who are most at risk to assure that all students make progress. The principal has scheduled funds to allow all teachers to work beyond the regular school day so all students receive additional instruction. The principal involves the assistant principal and other key members to help inform hiring decisions to assure that incoming staff is well suited to support the goals of the school. When selecting candidates, the school looks for candidates who view education as a lifelong career, knows and respects the community and will work collaboratively with the staff. Thoughtful decisions regarding hiring and teaching assignments have helped establish cohesive grade level teams who work collaboratively to develop instructional plans to accelerate student achievement.
- The school has established a safe, nurturing environment that promotes the academic and social development of students and adults. (1.4)
 - The principal shared that the whole staff is committed to promoting safety at the school. It begins upon entering the school, where clear expectations regarding protocols to be followed by visitors are established. The administration provides support to teachers when meeting with parents to assure effective communication. Experienced teachers, who are adept at implementing effective discipline strategies, offer support to new teachers in order to play a role in the school's effort to maintain a safe and orderly environment. The Response to Intervention (RTI) team, led by the special education liaison, meets to discuss the academic and social needs of students. Teacher referrals, results of formative and summative assessments, Degrees of Reading Progress (DRA) are analyzed by the team to develop intervention plans and assess effectiveness in promoting progress. The guidance counselor and psychologist, who are part of the RTI team, monitor the social/emotional needs of students and the services provided to promote effective personal behaviors. The school employs a part time dean that provides support and guidance to students who exhibit at-risk behavior. The school's special education liaison closely monitors the needs of students who have individualized education programs to ensure that needs are being met. Student voice is promoted through student led groups such as the National Honor Society; project based learning groups led by the assistant principal and the parent coordinators and student committees to plan special events such as the fifth grade graduation ceremony. The school's efforts have fostered a belief in parents and students that the school is safe haven that support the academic and emotional needs of students.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop teacher pedagogy to assure that students are provided with a variety of entry points to the school's standards based curricula in order to increase engagement and higher order thinking skills. (1.2)

- The principal shared that students learn best when teachers plan rigorous lessons that have explicit outcomes aligned to the CCLS. Teachers are expected to foster a classroom environment where students feel comfortable taking risks and asking questions in order to gain a deep understanding of content. Student discussion, writing about relevant topics across content areas and the use of technology to access information are also strategies promoted by the school to improve student achievement. The principal shared that the school closely analyzes Danielson's Framework for teaching to develop the instructional practices necessary to enable students to master grade level standards. The school has a focus on improving teachers' questioning and discussion techniques to promote the use of higher order thinking skills. However, classroom observations demonstrate that teachers generally ask lower level questions that require one word responses from students. In the majority of classes visited, teachers did most of the critical thinking for students and accepted responses of yes or no without requiring further elaboration to demonstrate understanding of content. In addition, tasks generally required students to restate information from texts read to support answers and as a result, students are not prompted to critically analyze information, as evidenced by student work and student discussions.
- The principal has allocated funds to ensure that teachers licensed to teach English as second language, academic intervention teachers and part-time coaches in English language arts and math push in to provide students with additional support in the classrooms. During interviews with teachers, they expressed that a variety of strategies are planned to support the needs of sub-groups of students such as; differentiated tasks, use of native language support, texts at varying levels of complexity and modeling to aid student comprehension. However, classroom observations demonstrate that although students work in small groups, tasks and strategies are not sufficiently differentiated to support specific needs and as a result, students do not always understand learning objectives as demonstrated by student interviews and review of student work.
- Strengthen the use of formative and summative assessments by individual teachers and teacher teams in order to adjust curricular and instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - The school uses chapter tests, benchmarks assessments, predictive assessments and results of standardized exams to monitor student progress and make instructional decisions. The principal indicated that all rubrics used come from the programs purchased and that teachers make adjustments to rubrics to align to school expectations. Teachers use common core aligned rubrics across grades in English language arts and math to gauge student progress. Generally, feedback is provided to students on work resulting from end of unit assessments. Review of student work indicates that feedback provided to students does not provide explicit next steps for improvement, nor is feedback consistently aligned to the rubrics used. Feedback provided to students generally consists of compliments such as "nice job" or you are "hard working" but do not identify specific strategies used that are aligned to grade level standards. When asked how they knew if they were making progress towards grade level goals, some students discussed grades received on benchmark assessments but could not cite others sources of data. As a

result, students could not articulate how their work is graded, or how feedback helps them improve.

- During interviews, teachers indicated that exit tickets, observations and student work are used to gauge student understanding. Teachers also indicated that planned group activities, discussions and worksheets provide insight into student understanding of key concepts. However, classroom observations demonstrated that teachers primarily use questioning as a method of gauging student understanding. Furthermore, teachers generally do not memorialize data regarding student performance gathered during classroom activities to inform student grouping and instructional plans. Consequently, their ability to effectively group students and develop targeted instructional plans to accelerate student learning is limited.
- Deepen structures that promote the collaborative review of student work by teacher teams to assure that tasks and curricular units improve student outcomes. (4.2)
 - All teachers are scheduled to meet in grade level teams to review student work in order to modify instructional plans. The school has identified a specific protocol that teachers are expected to follow when engaging in analysis of student work in order to identify areas of need. Teachers are assigned roles to assure participation by all. Teacher teams observed focused on reviewing item analysis of end of unit chapter tests in math and writing skills resulting from benchmark assessments. Coaches and the assistant principal attend teacher team meetings to provide guidance and support in meeting school expectations. However, discussion of student work centers on general observations regarding skills demonstrated by the student that are loosely correlated to rubrics and school goals. Although teachers are aware of students who are not demonstrating proficiency, they are still in the process of identifying trends across classrooms in order to make informed curricular decisions. Teachers develop plans to address identified skills through small group instruction during the day and during after-school programs. However, teachers do not yet develop strategic, targeted plans that explicitly teach strategies to help develop the necessary skills to enable students to master grade level standards.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: P.S. 325	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
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