

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Children's Workshop School**

**Elementary School M361**

**610 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10009**

**Principal: Maria Velez Clarke**

**Dates of review: April 28 – 29, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Daniella Phillips**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Children's Workshop School is an elementary school with 258 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 12% Black, 33% Hispanic, 40% White, and 14% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Principal, teachers and staff nurture an exceptionally respectful and inclusive culture that promotes academic and social-emotional growth for all learners. (1.4)
  - Students affirm that they are known fully by adults in this school, as one fifth grade boy stated, “My teachers from last year came to our writing celebration this year and remembered my small moment story.” Student attendance is high at 93.3%, with steady gains since 2010. Moreover, the school’s rate of chronic student absenteeism (16.7%) is far lower than the 20.2% City-wide average, as staff credit daily check-ins with all students and families and guidance groups for students in need of personal support. Beyond attendance, the entire tone of the school is exceptionally positive, respectful, and tolerant as seen by adult and student interactions, as well as laughter and enthusiasm for what is happening in classrooms and on field experiences.
  - Family outreach and professional development center on knowing and celebrating each child’s learning and interests. The school-wide instructional focus on differentiation has led to a revamping of early morning tutoring groups and increased inclusion with District 75 students, while supported by professional development in intervention strategies and mainstreaming effectively with all learners. Parents are full, active partners in both academic and social-emotional efforts as evidenced by a range of committees (such as nutrition, hiring, and technology) that are co-chaired by parents and teachers. Additionally, parents’ presence in the school is welcomed and supportive, as volunteers, chaperones, co-performers with students and staff, and audiences.
- Teachers share a belief in student-centered learning which then leads to consistent teaching practices of high levels of student engagement and reflection. (1.2)
  - All teachers share strong beliefs that students achieve and learn best when taught to be independent, critical, and creative thinkers. Staff embraces Teachers College Reading and Writing Project units of study and they commit fully to school-wide curricular programs, such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. “Honoring the Dream” study and performing arts celebration. Teachers have good understanding of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and they collaborate in their instructional planning. Across most classrooms, students had varied opportunities to touch, see, and share through discussion noticings about objects as part of learning, such as a pre-kindergarten class where students counted seeds in the flower pot using addition and subtraction or a fourth grade class where students analyzed primary document letters from a steamship captain and then designed advertisements for similar voyages. Such school-wide practices have resulted in high levels of student participation and engagement.

- Teachers assess student learning effectively which results in targeted interventions and collaborative instructional planning. (2.2)
  - Since most classes are multi-aged and not grade-specific, there is a broad range of academic levels in each classroom. Teachers use protocols to analyze student work and then make good use of this data to make instructional decisions. Additionally, teachers use common assessments and frequent turn-and-talks and other forms of checks for understanding to determine student progress and plan small group learning. Over several years, there has been a school-wide focus on writing and to help students track their own progress, they take pre- and post- assessments for each interdisciplinary writing unit and review rubrics with feedback from teachers about next steps.
- Teachers align and revise curricula thoughtfully to Common Core Learning Standards while safeguarding core values of interdisciplinary learning and social justice which deepens community investment in curricula. (1.1)
  - Teachers collaborate in revising curriculum maps and units of study each year. They do so with special attention to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and with supports and scaffolds, including graphic organizers and visual cues, for different learners. Fifth grade teachers, for example, produced a newsletter to families explaining the CCLS and instructional shifts, and then highlighting specific examples of CCLS adjustments in their literacy and math units. This school invests in interdisciplinary and cross-grade curricular initiatives by starting discussions at annual retreat, looking closely at student work and outcomes, and then continuing throughout the year. As a result, students and families speak enthusiastically about hallmark units, like the “Living the Dream” book project about social justice issues.

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

- Strengthen observation practices so that feedback is timely and, therefore, informs and improves professional development. (4.1)
  - Teachers trust the principal and describe her instructional feedback as “fair,” “helpful,” and aligned with the Danielson Framework. Others note that the school leader is unafraid about having difficult conversations and very caring and compassionate in doing so. However, the pacing of classroom observations and submission of written feedback is often late which then limits the opportunity to address concerns with targeted support. Additionally, 25% of surveyed teachers describe professional development experiences at the school as “short-term” without cohesive cycles of improving teaching practices.
- Refine school-level structures for monitoring teaching and learning so that teachers receive more adequate coaching across content areas and current student work is central to instructional decisions. (5.1)
  - Teachers vary in how they describe the kind of coaching they receive to improve their practices, which leads to some inconsistencies in instruction across grades. While the school has robust teacher teams and

committees (such as technology), there are insufficient formal structures for monitoring teaching and professional development. On the other hand, a strong example of monitoring and adjustment has occurred in the first and second grade bridge classes this year. Due to a teacher's prolonged absence, teachers on the grade committed to revise their entire grade-level program mid-year by collapsing three classes into two and infusing supports such as volunteer tutors so that all students would benefit from instructional consistency at a high level. However, in other areas, such as mixed experiences by teachers regarding coaching, there do not appear to be clear steps to address or improve.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| School name: <b>Children's Workshop School</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                       |          | <b>X</b>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Instructional Core</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>UD</b>             | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b>          | <b>WD</b> |                   |           |                       |
| 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> |