



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Alfred Zimberg

Elementary School Q002

75-10 21st Avenue

Queens

NY 11370

Principal: Joseph Taddeo

Dates of review: February 11-12, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Alfred Zimberg School is an elementary school with 675 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 36% Hispanic, 38% White, 24% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A rich curriculum across all subject areas aligns to key standards and engages all learners ensuring opportunities for all students to participate in rigorous tasks. (1.1)
 - School leaders review the Citywide Instructional Expectations and analyze student performance data including Go Math chapter tests, baseline assessments, Acuity, educational performance, running records and the New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test (NYSESLAT) to support their work on the alignment of the curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As a result, the 3rd grade team is working on an English language arts unit to ensure that students are prepared to write argumentative essays. Students use proven strategies to understand questions, add details and cite text evidence. The team adapted the curriculum to meet specific needs by providing additional resources to support students when writing their argumentative essays. For example, teachers' plans include the use of several entry points such as visual charts, sentence starters, highlighting, and identifying key-words in the question and understanding text through academic language work for the English as a second language (ESL) and special education students. Consequently, 80% of the third grade students are able to write argumentative essays citing text based evidence. Informal assessment data showed that students excelled on math computation questions. However, formal assessment data reflected weaknesses in application of knowledge to real world problems, as per the demands of the CCLS. Therefore, school leaders instituted a daily "Problem of the Day" math component for students across all grades. During this time, teachers present a multi-step real world word problem pertaining to current instructional units. Teachers assess student understanding throughout the process through turn and talks, observations and checklists. Based on this data, teachers guide future instruction for solving real-world problems. To date, 60% more students demonstrate proficiency according to the "Problem of the Day" data analysis. As a result, this improvement on solving real-world mathematical word problems promotes college and career readiness.
 - The goal of fifth grade teachers is to increase student understanding and performance in solving multi-step word problems in math. Initial assessments identified deficiencies in sequencing problems and deciphering extraneous from pertinent information. The team modified the pacing of lessons and the order of units of study in order to design meaningful academic learning experiences to cognitively engage all students. For example, teachers model for students how to dissect word problems and strategies on how to set them up for solution. Teachers of special education students and English language learners plan strategies such as, rereading, self-questioning and manipulatives to support student learning. As a result, 59% of the fifth grade students showed an increase in understanding and completing multi-step word problems accurately.

- The deeply reflective principal uses all school resources strategically aligned to the school's goals and the Common Core focus that has significantly enhanced student achievement. (1.3)
 - Budget decisions are based on reducing student to teacher ratio. Therefore, the school created additional kindergarten and first grade classes. Based on the data, the school hired a part-time English language arts (ELA) Academic Intervention Services (AIS) teacher to support the lowest third performing students so that they are able to meet instructional goals. In addition, due to low math scores on the State exam, the school created a math cluster position to improve student progress. The math cluster also provides teachers professional development on the new math curriculum. As a result, 70% of students demonstrated progress on the Go Math end of unit assessments.
 - The thoughtful school leaders make deliberate organizational decisions to support the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals to improve student performance in math and English language arts (ELA). For example, teachers voted on a School Based Option (SBO) which provides teacher teams time during the extended day and six half day sessions until the end of the school year to discuss learning trends and next instructional steps. In addition, two common preps a week are embedded within the school schedule to ensure time for teachers to meet and plan. When needed, substitute teachers are hired to allow more time for teachers to formulate plans that meet the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students. A review of running records, performance series, unit assessments and performance based tasks demonstrate an increase in reading levels for all students especially English language learners (ELLs) and special education students. As a result, classroom observations indicate an increase in student engagement due to rigorous teaching points and more student to student discussions. Furthermore, an analysis of rubric-based scores on writing portfolio assignments and reading responses show that students express themselves more clearly using details from the text.
- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and benefit from the effective support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - One of the school's goals is to value and cultivate a safe and inclusive culture. Safety meetings are conducted monthly with representation from all stakeholders. The school culture supports an open door policy where all adults are approachable by staff, students and parents. An inclusive school culture is promoted and evident through the principal's cabinet, which includes teachers from across the school, and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) executive board meetings where teachers from all grades meet with the parents. A suggestion box outside the main office is provided for the school community's recommendations and concerns. For example, a group of fifth grade students petitioned the principal to take up a collection for the Philippines that led to students collecting donations. In addition, New York Cares created a mural representing a "Giving Tree" across an entire wall on the first floor where staff and students add leaves that publicly celebrate an academic or social action they are proud of. Currently, there are over fifty leaves on the tree. Such

activities ensure students' social emotional well-being and results in a safe environment and inclusive culture that enhances progress toward the school's goals. Consequently, parent and staff state that children continuously demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of others. In addition, there has been an 80% decline in disciplinary incidents as evidenced on the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS).

- All classroom teachers know their students well academically. Teachers always maintain close records of student progress through conferences with individual students in the core content areas. This year, teachers administered student interest surveys so that they are able to get to know all of their individual students. As a result, these surveys conducted by the classroom teacher have increased the teachers' knowledge of their students so that they can support them not only academically, but socially, emotionally and through their various learning styles and interests. Lesson plans reflect teachers' knowledge of this information about each student. For example, a second grade teacher made note in her plans to ensure that Arabic students would be reminded to read from left to right as opposed to right from left which is the direction familiar to their native language. The school attendance team consists of the administration, pupil personnel secretary, guidance counselor and attendance teacher. Monthly meetings coordinate outreach and support that aligns with the needs of families and students. In September, a grade attendance race was launched. Every month, the grade with the highest percent of attendance is displayed on the bulletin board in the main hallway where a graph of students with exemplary attendance is posted. At the end of the year, the grade with the highest number of monthly earns a pizza party. As a result of focusing on the needs and interests of the students, there has been an overall increase in attendance from 94% to 95.2% as noted on Automate the Schools (ATS) report.
- Across classrooms, teacher use common assessments to understand student progress and adjust curricula and instruction that ensures student growth in meeting the Common Core Learning Standards expectations. (2.2)
 - At the start of each unit of study, all teachers administer pre-assessments to understand student beginning skill levels, content and concept knowledge. These baseline assessments drive teacher preparation and lead to daily lesson plans that include flexible grouping and appropriate scaffolds for individual and student groups. For each task, whether formative or summative, a rubric guides students and clearly articulates expectations. Students understand the grading policies and strive to move their performance to the next level. Teacher feedback is extremely specific, not only to the rubric standards, but to the actual places in work products where students need to make adjustments to increase their learning. For example, built into the Go Math program are "Check-Up" questions as part of the guided practice that teachers assess and record. This data is then used to give students specific feedback that guides individual, small and whole group instruction. In order to ensure students meet the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals in showing growth in math and ELA performance tasks, the school shifted the focus from summative to formative assessments. These formative assessments guide ongoing instruction to ensure that students have the content knowledge and skills to succeed on performance based tasks. When

asked about a specific next step comment on a writing piece, a student stated, "My next step to improve my writing is to include more vivid language." In every lesson, consistent checks for understanding ensures teachers gather real time data that leads to students engaging in tasks that provide appropriate access to the content. Students articulate their goals and can articulate why they are in a particular group. Students are given many opportunities to self-assess and work as partners with their teacher to implement strategies to accomplish their next steps. As a result, according to teachers' checklists, there has been a 75% increase in student progress in writing.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the processes used to measure the effectiveness of school level decisions to ensure that all practices lead to the intended outcomes for all students across the school. (5.1)
 - School leaders have formal structures in place that decisively collect performance data, student work products and teacher evaluation scores to measure the effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions across the school. There are procedures in place to evaluate school culture and organizational decisions, with protocols for collecting data and sharing outcomes school wide. The principal, assistant principals and data specialist work closely with teacher teams to evaluate their work and provide ongoing professional development to expand capacity in understanding and implementing the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). However, the structures to ensure that the evaluation of the work of teams is meaningful and articulated in a manner that clearly makes the connection between pedagogical practice and student outcomes are not fully evident. As a result, structures to deeply assess this aspect of team work are not fully embedded, and therefore do not yet produce a complete understanding of how instruction is accelerating student progress.

- Further refine teaching practices to ensure the vast majority of teachers strategically provide multiple entry points so that lessons challenge all students and result in producing meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - Teachers plan lessons and use scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into instruction in response to student's needs and interests, including special education students. The use of word walls across classrooms helps all students build their vocabulary. Also, the school focuses on supporting English language learners (ELLs) by hiring only certified ELL teachers and providing an after school Title III program. However, lessons do not always challenge all students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, in that assignments do not include opportunities for them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills or extend their learning, thus limiting even greater learning outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Alfred Zimberg School	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