

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Nancy DeBenedittis School

**Q016
41-15 104th Street
Corona
NY 11368**

Principal: Elaine Iodice

Dates of review: October 29-31, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 16 is an elementary school with 1,734 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 87% Hispanic, 1% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 36% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's culture of ongoing learning for all students is represented in curricula and tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) resulting in college and career readiness. (1.1)
 - The school's mission that all students can meet standards of excellence and reach their dreams through collaborative instruction that is meaningful to students' lives is being met with a focus on the instructional shifts and curricula that is well aligned to the CCLS. The school has adopted ReadyGen and GoMath curricula that are supported by professional development to help teachers develop new strategies like challenging students cognitively with high level questions and discourse. As a result, English language arts (ELA) performance has increased by +2.6% for students achieving Levels 3 and 4 and +1.1% of students attaining proficiency levels.
 - The school offers three models of bilingual education as well as a gifted and talented program for grades two through five. The dual language program has consistently outscored district and city programs for the greatest amount of students achieving Levels 3 and 4 on the ELA state test for consecutive years. Certified gifted and talented teachers enrich curriculum through collaborative projects with New York City established cultural institutions and school-based art and music teachers by utilizing curriculum compacting, Independent Investigation Method (IIM) and Enrichment Cluster Programs. The School wide Enrichment Model (SEM) has expanded to include students throughout the community. Students agree that these programs motivate them to come to school and be the best students they can be. In addition, throughout the school, the quantity and quality of students' writing across the grades, indicates the articulated standards, essential questions, academic vocabulary, and listening and speaking goals that resonate with students of all subgroups. In-depth, detailed and deliberate planning to design and refine tasks to emphasize higher order thinking and the use of complex texts as samples for writing prompts pro-actively addresses the needs of learners.
- The principal makes effective organizational decisions to align resources with the goals of the school in order to provide students with optimal learning experiences. (1.3)
 - Administration strategically uses the school's budget for technology, professional development and student remedial/enrichment resources to meet the school goals. As a result, students are experiencing rigorous instruction, including reading challenging material closely, and discussing it, citing evidence from the text, and in mathematics, learning to think quickly and problem solve. Twelve new teachers and four student support service members have been added to the staff. The implementation of the Special Education Reform has increased the amount of special education classes to include ten Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes and seven self-contained classes. Long range plans to increase rigor in

math is being monitored through the lens of consistent review and appraisal of student work products across grades and content areas. According to the math inquiry team progress analysis, grade two students had an average growth of +4.91% on the math exemplars rubric and the overall percentage of growth for grades K-2 was +3.6%.

- School leaders are committed to providing opportunities for teachers to participate in structured inquiry time. Weekly common planning time has been sustained in the school schedule for classroom teachers and specialty teachers through regularly scheduled periods. English as a Second Language (ESL) push-in teachers also have common planning periods with the grade. Common planning time has also been scheduled vertically across grades for bilingual, dual language, gifted and talented and special education. Distributed leadership allows facilitators to receive professional development on the protocols for analyzing student work and maintaining concise minutes of each meeting which transition to the next agenda. This instructional decision has led to the development of standards based, narrative writing rubric that is vertically aligned, enabling students to advance in their writing, while providing students and families with a view of the anticipated goals for the next grade. In addition, through a School-Based Option (SBO), all special education students receive an extended day in order to ensure that student and school goals are being met, while engaging these youngsters in challenging high level tasks.
- The school promotes a highly safe and nurturing environment that supports collaborative relationships, and scholarly behavior promoting academic and social growth. (1.4)
 - The school fosters very positive and close interactions among staff, students and parents exhibiting an inclusive environment that supports all members of the school community. Although this school houses over 1,700 students the tone of the building is comforting and conducive to high degrees of teaching and learning. Student of the Week and the Power of One award programs are two of the many ways students are acknowledged for their citizenship and scholarship. Upper grade students are proud of their school safety squad comprised of 72 students in the fifth grade. These students provide guidance, monitor morning arrival and serve as role models for their peers. This program is an aspiration for students in the lower grades as they talk about steps to follow to be inducted into this squad. Additionally, a student group has been scheduled to meet with the principal regularly to discuss pertinent school issues that can be reported back to the student body. Students feel empowered due to the resources they can use like student council and guidance counselors for exchange of ideas and justification of students rights. As a result of the school's meaningful involvement with their community the latest Learning Environment Survey indicated a significant improvement in communication strategies. Parents' results have increased by 5%, from 8.5 to 9.0 and teachers' results increased by 10% from 7.7 to 8.7.
 - The school has structures in place to ensure that students' social, emotional, and learning needs are well met. The parent coordinator, guidance counselors, Individual Educational Planning teacher (IEP) and

administration form a formidable team to support students regarding attendance improvements, counseling and behavioral interventions. Perfect class attendance is celebrated with a trophy that is passed from class to class each week. Student mentoring and peer mediation are two levers in place to support student achievement. One student said, "My student mentor showed me an easy way to figure out long division and now I am a champion at the process." A review of the school's data created a focus on college and career readiness for students and an awareness of activities for parents. This work around student achievement and high expectations is frequently discussed at school leadership meetings and has impacted the way students discuss middle school expectations. As a result, students discuss a non-negotiable "plan of success" that resonates throughout the school and guides students through the day. Furthermore, students know to be courteous, studious and kind based on the expectations that are provided for them as a member of this community.

- School leaders effectively monitor pedagogy with a focus on deepening adult learning and improving instructional practices throughout the school. (4.1)
 - Administrators observe teachers based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching using the Advance system for teacher evaluation and development, through formal and informal observations with the lens of questioning and discussion, coherent planning, assessment practices, and modifying instruction to meet students' needs. There is a teacher evaluation plan that delineates a specific time frame for goal setting meetings with school leaders where teachers are able to discuss their areas of expertise and areas for growth. Discussions are supported by student work, including how students are progressing. As a result, teachers agree that they are familiar with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the track they need to follow to improve teacher practice.
 - Teachers receive clear articulation from school leaders in response to classroom observations that foster the ability to pose high level questions, as well as suggestions for classroom management to support student thinking across classrooms. One teacher stated that her questioning strategies are now open ended and require greater wait time as a result of the feedback she received. Discussions during feedback sessions are motivated by the Danielson framework that is used by the school community to strengthen instructional acumen. New and experienced teachers indicated that they find the feedback from administration and support staff useful. New teachers receive additional support through network liaisons and inter-visitations. Teachers are able to refer to previous feedback and specifically state how it improved their instruction resulting in reflective conversations among staff to promote professional growth in order to improve teacher practice.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen teachers' knowledge of effective instructional strategies in order to provide multiple entry points that lead to higher levels of student work and thought processes. (1.2)

- The consensus of the school is that students learn best, “through a rigorous and challenging curriculum that assists students in being aware of what they are learning, why they are learning the subject matter and how it can help them later in life”. This vision is carried out in each classroom where metacognitive questions are posted in the front of the classroom for constant reflection and insight. Although teachers adhere to rubrics in order to strengthen their practice in alignment of instructional shifts there are uneven levels of evidence that reflect the shifts in all classrooms. In addition, not all teacher teams are discussing high level strategies to incorporate into their practices that are aligned to how children learn best, thus preventing instructional shifts to be fully shared at the school level.
- Differentiating instruction and homework through flexible grouping and scaffolding assignments using a myriad of graphic organizers and thinking maps gives students access to the curriculum and supports achievement of students in reading and math. Although most lessons are strategic in the manner of framing content to ensure that all learners have specific entry points, not all lessons lead to advances in learning, as there are not always strategic opportunities for all students to be equally challenged, limiting the acceleration of their progress.
- Strengthen assessment practices to provide a clear understanding of trends and patterns in order to adjust instructional decisions to meet the needs of all learners. (2.2)
 - The school has created a grading policy that is aligned with the CCLS and the new curricula. This policy will enable teachers to offer coherent and comprehensive feedback to students and parents that is synonymous with the grades that are being given towards assessments and rubric work. Although this new system is providing actionable feedback to students, it has yet to provide a clear picture of student mastery. Without feedback that students can call their own, not all students can articulate how they are doing and what they need to do to succeed at the highest level.
 - The school just completed the Fountas and Pinnell running records checklist for grades kindergarten through five. Inquiry teams use these ratings to determine instructional next steps for planning. For example, second grade teachers are researching new ESL strategies based on the results of the September running record overall scores. Students’ goals are succinctly matched to these determinations and upper grade students are able to articulate what reading level they are on and their focus to achieve the next level. Even though an adjustment of curriculum and instruction allows teachers to reflect on best practices and focus on specific subgroups of students, at this time not all English language learners and special education students are demonstrating increased mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Nancy DeBenedittis Elementary 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