



**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

St. Albans

Elementary School 036

**187- 01 Foch Boulevard
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Lynn M. Staton

Dates of review: November 18 – 19, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Lenon C. Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

St. Albans School is an elementary school with 463 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 90% Black, 8% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 11% 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 93.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teaching practice with a laser focus on improving instructional strategies to create targeted professional support that increases student outcomes. (4.1)
 - The school is continuing their full and enthusiastic embrace of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which was begun with last year's pilot program. The Danielson Rubric defines the clearest of expectations and provides the parameters for all dialogue about teaching and learning occurring daily in the school building. The principal and her assistant principals conduct formal and informal observations on a regular and consistent schedule relative to the teachers' choices during their initial planning conferences, which are evenly divided between the two options available, and they are careful to provide individualized feedback and specific next steps to teachers on a progressive basis. Additionally, the principal sets aside dedicated time to engage in robust discussions with teachers who needed further clarification on some of their initial evaluations and feedback, and teachers access the online resources in Advance and collaborate with administration to refine their strengths while meeting their challenges. Administrators focus teachers on solid low inference data identified in classrooms during lessons. Furthermore, teachers are encouraged to create and reflect on their own personal professional goals that would meet their needs and improve their pedagogical skills. All professional development plans currently in use in the school are based on teacher data in ARIS Learn and are fully aligned with school goals. Although the school emphasizes domains one and two in the Danielson Framework, strong and differentiated support is readily available for teachers to improve their planning and systematically gather any artifacts needed to accurately reflect practice, and formal and informal inter-class visitations offer teachers multiple opportunities to share best practices and incorporate new instructional strategies. These embedded practices lead to increased student engagement and improved teacher growth and reflection as evidenced in the School Survey and teacher team responses.
- School leaders and faculty effectively align curricula to key standards and provide engaging learning experiences that challenge students while supporting their learning. (1.1)
 - School leaders carefully reviewed the Citywide instructional expectations and after careful consideration decided to continue to adopt and adapt online material that is closely aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that are downloaded from both City and State sources. The principal stated that this approach allows the school to choose challenging tasks. The school selects complex texts to promote college and career readiness for students. Students write opinion pieces on challenging topics and support their viewpoints with text-based information and systematic reasoning. For example, a fourth grade class had students editing their more recent pieces of writing while creating new stories. Classroom libraries now contain a majority of non-fiction and

informational texts that teachers readily use along with web-based materials to enhance students' ability to analyze and synthesize complex information, and then distilled into strong opinion pieces. As a result, student work evidences the standards.

- The most recent State tests and baseline assessments delineated a glaring need to improve the reading proficiency levels of students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). Special education and English as a second language teachers, along with general education teachers, are implementing the Core Knowledge curriculum in grades kindergarten through two. They are also using Foundations, a phonics-based program that helps students learn to read independently. These approaches create the entry points for students to confidently tackle complex texts. As a result, there is already an 11% increase in phonological awareness and reading fluency during the first eight weeks of this school year as measured by running records.
- Teachers have refined a unified belief system about how students learn best using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which helps improve instructional practice and student achievement. (1.2)
 - The school leaders and faculty embody the belief that students must play an active role in their own learning. This belief is rooted in the Danielson Framework that facilitates the release of responsibility from the teacher to the student. To that end, the school focuses on the planning and implementation of higher order thinking questions within lessons that propel student discussion through partner and group strategies. Students are trained in the practice of partnerships and actively engage with their peers in the analysis of assigned tasks and direct application of their knowledge to problem solving. For example, in a third grade English language arts class, students were constructing stories from a series of illustrations with creative questions a reader might ask, plus adding in supporting details. They then presented and defended their creations. In a fifth grade math class, students were working in groups around solving place value problems and then sending a representative to the interactive whiteboard to explain the solution to the class. Students expressed, when asked, that they work with their group to understand a challenging task before reaching out to their teachers for assistance. Across classrooms, these belief systems provide students with the entry points they need without embarrassment, including students with disabilities and English language learners. These problem solving approaches and critical thinking skills lead to increased student outcomes as demonstrated in growth from the units of study pre- and post-assessments in writing and math.
- The school uses a wide range of assessment data effectively to guide student-grouping decisions and inform planning, which results in a clear picture of student performance that drives instructional adjustments. (2.2)
 - The school does consistent work around curriculum alignment using materials from the State and the City websites. To that end, teachers develop cohesive rubrics within the school that accurately portray where students are performing with reference to the standards and benchmarks are routinely established to monitor progress towards grade-level goals.

Rubrics are embedded within units of study and students are trained to use them along with self-assessment checklists to identify their strengths and areas for growth. Teachers provide specific feedback using proficiency levels to celebrate student strengths and support their areas of need and next steps are aligned to the rubrics. In a fourth grade class using book clubs, the teacher conferred with students providing such precise feedback the students were able to incorporate the suggestions before the period was over. These practices provide meaningful, relevant information to students to thoughtfully improve their work products as evidenced by improvements in text-based arguments by fourth grade students as measured by grade level unit tests.

- Throughout the school, teachers use Teacher's College Writing units, Good Readers for Guided Reading, EngageNY, Expeditionary Learning, as well as teacher-made common assessments and conference notes to measure student progress. During common planning time, student work from multiple measures is examined relative to the standards and adjustments are made to curriculum to accelerate improvement in students' deficiencies. These same methods identify students in need of either intervention (if struggling) or extensions (if excelling). As a result of student academic identification their needs are better met leading to improvements in student writing from last year as measured by unit assessments and on-demand writing.

What the school needs to improve

- Maximize the strategic decisions that support the school's instructional goals to better meet students' learning needs. (1.3)
 - The principal elevated the literacy coach to a full assistant principal position to support the increased volume of observations required, while still maintaining the responsibilities for providing job-embedded coaching. Staff time is structured for teacher teams to meet a minimum of twice weekly for planning, inquiry, and analysis of student work. Technology has expanded with a new bank of laptop computers that are available for teachers use and Smart boards are installed in every classroom. The school uses significant web-based resources to provide challenging material for teachers to use. However, the constant downloading, printing, and copying of standards-based material is quite labor intensive and absorbs enormous efforts by the school staff. As a result, resources of time and materials are not maximized and instructional strategies and learning tasks are not always readily accessible, thus impacting timely opportunities to meet the needs of all students.
- Enhance processes to purposefully evaluate and adjust curriculum, instruction, and organizational practices, to meet the learning needs of students and the CCLS expectations. (5.1)
 - The school has been successful in refining its capacity for improvement by promoting the work of teacher teams both horizontally and vertically. Teams have streamlined their planning and inquiry by routinely analyzing student work and utilizing the results to make curricula adjustments in response to student learning needs. For example, the volume and complexity of student writing has been strongly increased. The

administrative team reviews the agendas, minutes, and recommendations of teacher teams in an effort to coherently integrate the CCLS. Talent coaches from the network further support the work of these teams. However, while the principal speaks to processes to evaluate instructional and organizational practices of the school, teacher teams operate independently largely outside her purview. As a result, there are missed opportunities to effect more timely revisions to curriculum and teacher practice.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The St. Albans 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