



**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**

**Nathaniel Hawthorne**

**26Q074**

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Queens  
NY 11364**

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**Lead Reviewer: Anita Saunders**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Nathaniel Hawthorne is a middle school with 1007 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 5% Black, 10% Hispanic, 19% White, and 66% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 98.0%

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has developed engaging rigorous curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts offering meaningful learning experiences to improve student achievement for all students. (1.1)
  - The school is using the Prentice Hall Literature Common Core Series by Pearson that is Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned and Great Book Foundations as a supplement to the English language arts (ELA) curriculum. Staff collaboratively examined numerous ELA programs and decided these were the most challenging and would meet the needs of their students. Additionally, the school has developed its own writing curriculum with pacing calendars and curriculum maps based on Engage New York that include the citywide instructional shifts, focusing on argumentative/opinion writing specifically to ensure college and career readiness. Project PACED (Participation and Collaboration in Educational resource Development) Mathematics 2010, created by Network 535, and CCLS aligned is used for rigorous math instruction. Holt McDougal Mathematics is used as a supplement. Hence, the CCLS and the instructional shifts are integrated in all content areas. Presentation boards throughout the school display students argumentative essays in all subjects. Eighth graders wrote social studies essays with a claim and counter claim as to whether the Progressive Era was successful in laying the groundwork for a modern American society that is free from abuse in politics. As a result, 85% of the students demonstrate an increase of at least one level on the argumentative essay writing rubric.
  - The assistant principals (APs) meet regularly with a team of lead teachers, Ambassadors, in each content area to ensure curriculum alignment and coherence across all grades. Every teacher uses a flip chart of the CCLS to plan lessons to ensure curricula alignment. All lessons include time for student conversations explaining reasons and multiple ways to obtain an answer, thereby ensuring high levels of thinking. Classrooms display a discussion protocol chart that includes suggestions for student to student discussion such as “I agree with ...because,” or “I disagree with ...” or “I would like to add ...” A special education teacher support service (SETSS) provider pushes into classes and pulls out students with disabilities (SWDs) and attends all ELA and mathematics department planning sessions to provide aligned, appropriate and targeted multiple entry points, such as visual prompts. As noted in the most recent progress report, there is a 3.4% increase in the 75% growth or higher in English language arts for these students. In addition, English language learners (ELLs) were observed verbalizing character traits in English to demonstrate their thinking with an English as a second language (ESL) teacher using new vocabulary words such as “glare and smirk.” Fourteen percent of these students have progressed to no longer needing ESL services and there is a 22.4% increase in the 75% growth or higher on the ELA exams for these students.

- The principal's strategic leadership promotes organizational decisions that support instructional goals to continuously improve student outcomes that result in student progress. (1.3)

- The principal scheduled teacher team meetings to meet at least once a week during common preparation time, another 50 minutes of common planning time using an School Based Option (SBO) on Mondays, and department meetings once a week. These teams analyze curriculum to ensure upcoming tasks are meaningful, rigorous, include multiple entry points to meet the needs of all students and are CCLS aligned and coherent across all grades. A grade 8 ELA team analyzed student work, noticing trends that led to the discovery of gaps in what students currently know and are able to do and what they need to know. This led to implications for specific planning and preparation for students, including ELLs and high performing students. A math department team reviewed Depth of Knowledge (DOK) high level questioning during teacher and student to student discussions for mathematical reasoning. These instructional changes ensure appropriate lessons for all students. As a result, conceptual learning improved, as evidenced by increased student engagement, assessment results and student work products..

○The principal hired two SETSS teachers, two special education teachers for new integrated collaborative teaching (ICT) classes, and one math teacher. He changed teacher assignments to strengthen grades and instructional knowledge. For example, he moved a grade 7 ELA teacher to grade 6; a grade 7 ELA teacher to grade 7/8; a grade 7 social studies teacher to grades 7/8; a grade 8 social studies teacher to grade 7; a grade 8 ELA teacher to grade 7, and a grade 6 ELA teacher to grade 7. These changes, aligned with the school's goals to improve instruction, close the achievement gap for grade 7 by increasing student achievement and engaging students in challenging academic tasks. As a result, the ELA failure rate dropped 62%, from 26 to 10 students, and social studies failure rate dropped 54%, from 13 to 6 students.

- School leaders and faculty systematically collect and analyze a wide range of data that successfully identifies the needs of students and adjusts instruction that results in improved student progress and performance (2.2)

- All content areas and grades use common assessment calendars that include CCLS pre- and post- unit assessments with aligned tasks. English language arts baseline assessments and IReady Diagnostics are administered three times a year in ELA and mathematics. Social studies and science include NYC Performance Task Baseline assessments, formative assessments such as an argumentative research task, as well as lab reports in science. The Spanish assessment calendar includes a language survey, quarterly assessments, and a mid- term and final exam. The school uses a new computer program, Skedula, that allows the principal and assistant principals to view and track trends as well as each student's academic progress in all subjects using his/her assessment results, as well as their attendance. Instructional and curricular adjustments and decisions are made by teacher teams who meet weekly. For example, In a 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA class, the teacher provided three different activities for completing an assignment based on reading an article with additional support for English language learners where sentences included a blank

space to fill in the proper word and a notation that stated the paragraphs where to find the answer, thus ensuring appropriate content area support. Students with disabilities received supports with visual hints specifying paragraph numbers. Similarly, and an 8<sup>th</sup> grade math class problem solving sheet used pictures that contained descriptive words underneath to assist English language learners demonstrate mastery of the concepts. As a result, all of these students were able to read and correctly solve the problems, thus increasing their math achievement scores.

- Across classrooms, student conversations provide on-going checks for understanding with comments such as “I still have questions about ...” or “I’m sure ... has some interesting ideas about this.” Students also complete exit slips or “sum it ups” to check for understanding after a lesson and before small group work or individual work begins so instructional adjustments are able to be instantly made by teachers. These self-assessment procedures increase students’ engagement and knowledge of what they have learned and what they did not understand. Consequently, teachers provide students with their next steps in the learning process, ensuring high levels of student ownership of learning and the motivation and impetus to excel in their performance.
- School leaders promote teacher professional growth and reflection with effective feedback grounded in the Danielson rubric resulting in improved school wide instructional practices (4.1)
  - Danielson’s book, *Enhancing Professional Practice, A Framework for Teaching*, has been the subject of professional development for the past three years. This studious endeavor reflects the school’s belief that adults learn best when they are involved in the learning process, have trust to question and reflect with each other and the leadership. The principal requires reflection sheets after every faculty conference and responds to each teacher in writing. He also has an open door policy for teachers to come in and talk, thus building trust. The school mentor teacher meets with new teachers once a month, as does the principal in his own meetings. Each teacher is also provided with a department buddy teacher that they meet with before or after school. The focus is continuously on instruction and curriculum aligned to the CCLS and instructional shifts with strategies for students that are proven to work. The principal’s focus is on teacher effectiveness, team work and the school motto, Together Everyone Achieves More (T.E.A.M). Department meetings focus on teacher practice and have involved norming of video lessons. The principal and assistant principals walk through the building to observe changes in practice and look at samples of student work products. As a result, teachers are cohesively collaborating, sharing best practices and scaffolding instruction.
  - The principal and assistant principals have completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> cycles of short observations for all teachers. Individual face to face conversations and written forms such as emails or notes provide documented feedback using the Danielson rubric that includes strengths, weaknesses and next steps. The principal supports one teacher who requests continuous feedback as she works to achieve highly effective ratings of practice. Another teacher is supported by individual meetings with the principal once a month to review the rubric and discuss curriculum and instruction. Professional development for discussion techniques, Depth of Knowledge

questioning and student engagement continues to be a focus on a regular basis at teacher team, and department meetings so that pedagogical expectations are clear. As a result, there is an 87% improvement in ratings, from developing or ineffective practices, to effective practices according to the Danielson rubric and an 80% change in to effective or highly effective in the second or third cycle in the areas of questioning and student engagement.

- The school maintains a supportive learning environment and has high expectations for learning and behavior that are shared with parents and students leading to academic and personal gains for students. (1.4)

- The school's theory of action states: "If we increase the knowledge and skill of teachers regarding data driven instruction, multiple entry points and questioning and discussion techniques, the teachers will be able to construct rigorous performance tasks embedded in Common Core aligned units of study that reflect student diversity and student engagement and learning will improve as a result of engaging in such tasks. This is the work that will allow our students to become college and career ready as we continue to soar from good to Great and BEYOND!" This theory also includes the Respect for All culture of the school that emphasizes acceptance and respect for all students and staff, and has resulted in a community of learners. Students see the oath displayed in their classrooms, and recite and live it daily. The 3Cs, collaboration, conversation and communication permeate the culture. Students state feeling safe and there few suspensions, reduced 50% in the last year. The Student Organization (SO) consists of one student per class that meets weekly with an advisor and monthly with the principal. A Student Cabinet, one child per class, similar to the SO, meets twice a month with the assistant principal. These two groups have voiced the desire for more dances, spirit days and bike racks. As a result, the school has now implemented Pajama Day as one of the spirit days. The Respect for All liaisons meets with the dean to discuss the tone of the school. This has resulted in a hand signing oath for each class and a paper hand with the names of students who support the pledge that is displayed in the vestibule outside the school auditorium, ensuring a strong school culture of valuing the growth of students. Suspensions have dropped from eighteen in 2011-2012 to two in 2013-2014 for the period from September to December. The most recent Learning Environment Survey shows an increase in safety and respect from 7.8% to 8.0% from 2011-2012 to 2012-2013. Although the school has a peer mediation program, the principal states that the increased evidence of student and adult respect has so vastly improved, it is rarely used to mediate incidents.

- A question of the week is discussed for fifteen minutes each day in homeroom to increase social and emotional behavior and learning experiences. The principal is working to ensure that this evolves into a mini advisory class. Questions posed, such as "If you needed an 81 to pass and you received an 82, but the math total was incorrect and you really received a 79, what would you do?" Lively discussions ensued in each room as students debated moral values rooted in a strong desire to achieve. The parent coordinator, teachers and child support team provides workshops on the CCLS, Respect for All, Study Habits, and the High School application process. St. Francis College presented college and career readiness

workshops. Parents are part of a theater group, “Live Theater” where they receive reduced tickets to three to four Broadway shows. The Parent Teacher Association also provides speakers every month and the student organization has sponsored family trips to a New York Islander’s hockey game and Cinderella on Broadway. A family trip to the New York Botanical Gardens on January 5 is sponsored by Urban Advantage. All of these experiences support the culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that result in effective academic and personal growth of students and adults.

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

- Continue to provide multiple opportunities for meaningful engagement with classroom instruction in order to motivate all students to reach their highest potential and engage in high level thinking and work products. (1.2)
  - Many teachers use higher level DOK questioning and in some classes instruct students to use these in peer discussions. Multiple entry points are frequently provided for students. Differentiated student work assignments and products demonstrate the focus of ensuring meeting the learning needs of students. However, not every classroom is showing evidence of implementation to the same extent, thus preventing all students from engaging in tasks that result in the production of work products that cement the demonstration of high levels of thinking.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: <b>Nathaniel Hawthorne</b>	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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?				<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>	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?				<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>	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?				<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>