

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Robert E. Peary School

75Q075

**1666 Hancock Street
Ridgewood, Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: James Thorbs

Dates of review: April 23-25, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.075Q is an elementary/middle school with 500 students from Pre-K through grade 8. The school population comprises 25% Black, 42% Hispanic, 16% White, 14% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 2% unspecified students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 76% of the students enrolled and girls account for 24%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 85.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions in the use of resources, scheduling, technology, partnerships and staff to support the school's instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The principal has effectively allocated funds to finance two school-based instructional coaches to support teachers in best classroom practices aligned to the Danielson Framework and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). To support the school's technology initiative, funds were allocated to the technology coordinator to publish the "75Q Tech News", to provide staff with assorted methods to engage their students by incorporating technology in academic learning. In addition, the school purchased supplemental technology resources such as desktops, projectors and I-Pads and programmatic communication devices. This enhances students' ability to engage in real world opportunities outside the classroom and support college and career readiness skills. The school collaborates with various arts programs including Learning for Expanded Arts Program (LEAP) to support student directed art projects conveying the school's message of anti-bullying and anti-drugs. Hospital Audiences (HAI) provides a six week resident artist in the field of visual arts, music and theater classes. The positive result of this partnering is apparent by improved student communication skills as seen during classroom visits. For example, in a 5th grade classroom the question posed was "what is the purpose of the spring break"? Within the four small groups, students spoke to each other sharing their opinion, exchanging ideas and in some cases, changing their beliefs. All resources are used to support the school's instructional goals to increase student learning and prepare them for independence outside of the school environment.
 - The administrative team has supported professional learning communities by scheduling twice weekly meeting time (formal and informal). The school initiated five data inquiry teams: Grade-Band Level team, Thinking Maps team, Schools Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) data team, New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) data team and Unique Learning Systems team. The school's major initiatives are to promote effective questioning by teachers to foster higher order thinking skills, increase opportunities for students to question each other using open-ended questions and effective student learning through technology. These twice weekly meetings allow teachers to examine and analyze students' work and progress in meeting their goals, as determined against developmentally appropriate learning targets. In addition, teachers adjust/modify instruction and select appropriate supports. For example, during a 3-5 grade level meeting, the discussion centered on how do the non-verbal students demonstrate "citing evidence"? One teacher stated that using Picture Exchange Symbols (PECs) help support a student in her class. In addition, instructional funding was allocated to provide programmatic devices to increase communication for their non-verbal to minimally verbal students. Teachers also stated at the close of the 2012-2013 school-year, their student data and work samples indicated a need to target student writing. The school's investment in Unique Learning Systems (for students in alternate

assessment) is providing support with a targeted writing focus. As a result of this investment, the average growth for elementary students using Unique is 11.6%, intermediate 28.5% and middle school 41.5% Teachers stated that students are “no longer afraid to write in response to questions asked”. A review of the data indicates that 69% of students made gains in all tested areas, based on (SANDI) specifically content understanding, English language arts and mathematics.

- The school culture is collaborative, respectful and supportive of student academic and social–emotional needs resulting in a calm and orderly environment for learning to take place. (1.4)
 - School leaders have created a dynamic and supportive environment where staff and families collaborate to effectively develop and sustain a community that ensures the academic and behavioral success for all students is obtainable for all students. A highly developed system of positive behavior supports such as: “The Power of Choice”, “Therapeutic Crisis Intervention” and “Getting Ready to Learn” effectively reinforce positive choices and self-regulation. The school is vigilant and responsive in how these are implemented in maintaining a strong culture for learning for all students. Students in standardized and alternate assessment programs attain levels based on earning their behavioral and academic points. This allows students to self-monitor their growth and to communicate their achievement with parents on a daily basis. To guide school improvement efforts, the school involves the students in decision-making processes and committees such as the School Nutrition Committee in which, students spoke with pride about their influence on the school’s menu. Furthermore, students advocated for the school’s commitment to continue utilizing “Thinking Maps” as an academic support for their writing skills development. Parents unanimously reported that the school is very safe and their children were treated respectfully. During the 2012-2013 school-year, the school received a score of 2.60 on their Violent and Disruptive Incident Report (VADIR) and was placed on the “watch list”. In response, the school created a team to provide structure and support for behavior intervention. As a result of this action, the VADIR score is 1.08 as of April 1, 2014. Additionally, the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) indicates a 43% reduction in Code of Conduct incidents when comparing data from the end of 2013 to the end of 2014.
 - The school initiated Anti-bullying bi-monthly assemblies, poster contests, skits and an incentive program through the school store are held with the purpose of creating a safe and nurturing school setting. In each of the classes visited, as well as during a school-wide “walk-thru”, students were observed self-assessing their engagement in academics, as well as their behaviors in class. Students earn points, which allow them to participate in weekly Friday clubs or cash in their points at the school store. During the 2013-2014 school-year, 53 teachers and 27 related service providers participated in District 75 sponsored professional development. There has been a 29% increase in parent participation in school workshops. Parents are offered training in all the school’s behavior and academic programs so there is consistency between home and school. Parents requested training in the “Getting Ready to Learn” program (GRTL). This program is yoga-based and helps to reduce stress, focus attention, enhance performance and improve behaviors in the classroom. The school utilizes this program every morning after breakfast as a means to get students and staff “ready to learn”. As a result of this program, the school has seen that students have increase

their ability to self-regulate, attend to time on task and communicate by 35% from week 1 to week 20. In addition, the school is cognizant of the need to have students attend school on a regular basis in order to promote academic achievement; the school presently has 569 students with an 86.09% attendance rate, signifying a 5% increase compared to this time last year.

- Highly developed professional collaborations continuously strengthen cohesive curriculum and have promoted best classroom practices ensuring a shared commitment to increased student achievement. (4.2)
 - All teachers are active members of collaborative inquiry teams, both within and across sites, which focus on the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) uniformly into instruction across the school while integrating the instructional shifts as outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE). Team members, using consistent protocols where staff rotates as lead presenters or facilitators, review students' work generated prior to instruction on a unit of study and again at the end of the unit. Furthermore, the teams discuss instructional strategies that might be used, such as graphic organizers, and come to consensus as to what modifications are needed, such as the use of technology or augmentative devices, to ensure opportunities for all students to participate in the lessons presented. A review of the data, Formative Assessment of Standards Tasks (FAST) Benchmark 1 and FAST Benchmark 2 indicates a significant increase in the following standards: Reading for Information, Standard 1 increased by 19%. Operations and Algebraic Thinking, Standard 1 increased by 17%. These increases reflect the teams' work to increase students' achievement.
 - Team members engage in structured protocol to review students' writing pieces generated prior to instruction on a unit of study and writing pieces generated at the end of the unit. For example, the grade level teachers stated that students struggled in writing in the area of inferences. This was seen across grades, subjects and classrooms. As a result of the collaborative team meetings, teachers began to adjust instruction and lesson planning to include note-taking processes. There are consistent increases in writing stamina and the inclusion of supporting details as measured by the school's generated rubric evident in student portfolios. Thinking Maps was implemented in standardized assessment classroom to promote writing strategies, organizational methodology and higher order thinking skills. During the small student meeting, one learner stated that "thinking maps helps me to organize my thoughts and put it on paper". Students were able to tell me which map to use for different skills. One student stated "I use the flow map when I have to put things in the right order". Another student stated "I use the double bubble when I have to show how things are alike and how they are different". During the Thinking Maps inquiry team, it was noted that data analysis indicates there is a 25.87% growth in classrooms that use Thinking Maps from September to April, and for students that did not use Thinking Maps, there was only a 14.77% increase.
- The comprehensive school curriculum is modified and offers a wide range of opportunities for students to explore the CCLS that support their academic progress. (1.1)
 - The entire school community selected a range of curricula and programs to provide instructional access for their students across a broad range of

cognitive abilities and across the Autism Spectrum. The school adopted Ready Gen Reading and Writing Program, Go Math, Foss Kits for Science and Harcourt for Social Studies, for their K-5 standardized assessment students. For students in grades 6-8, the school purchased Expeditionary Learning, Connected Math 3, Glencoe Option B for Science and Holt, McDougal Texts for Social Studies. For students in alternate assessment, the school purchased Unique Learning Systems for grades K-8. The school's curricula embed the instructional shifts across grades, by requiring students to cite evidence from texts, find key ideas and supporting details and provide a balance of informational and literary texts in English language arts. In math the shift of focusing on fluency to the application of real world problems is explicit. For example, this is evident in the elementary curriculum map for the unit on investigations in number, data, time and space, with applications to money and telling time, a real world function, thus promoting college and career readiness skills. The school's extensive curriculum map provides a coherent overview for all teachers, across all sites, which lay out all the CCLS, which are aligned to the school's curriculum and all the assessments used within the organization.

- The school schedule was set to accommodate weekly morning teacher team meetings to support the adoption and adaptation of the Core curriculum materials for meaningful instruction in the classroom. Planning and refining is evident in the curriculum maps across grades and results in teachers engaging students through meaningful units of study and performance tasks in all content areas. School leaders and coaches support teacher work to unpack findings in assessments and student work products. The principal and assistant principals provide regular feedback for revisions to these tasks based on ongoing analysis of student work products. Furthermore, teacher lesson plans are based on students' learning styles. The carefully designed lesson plan template includes a section for differentiated tasks, texts and student groupings. For example, the 3-5 grade band teachers adjusted the math curriculum to include more support on multi-step word problems emphasizing mathematical academic language. Consequently, for students in the standardized assessment program, there is a 74% decrease in the number of students projected for summer school (from projected 45 students to 12 students).

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance teacher questioning during the delivery of instruction in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities to further develop critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - The school believes that children must have ownership of their learning and therefore, teachers create lessons that have real life connections. Across classrooms observed, lessons were provided that are consistently organized according to the workshop model with clear mini-lessons that connect learning to previous concepts and engages students in active involvement. This provides opportunities for students to engage in guided and independent practice. Specific elements of the Danielson Framework, such as grouping students by their cognitive and behavioral levels, are examples of how students are grouped by need. In addition, all classrooms are designed to be child-centered and encourage independence. Each classroom has clearly identified work centers to promote student directed task engagement.

However, in some classrooms, staff found it difficult to “let-go” in relinquishing some of that responsibility to students to take ownership of their learning.

- Across most classrooms teachers consistently stated, “Tell me how you came to that answer”. Students work in flexible small groups, are provided with support and scaffolds such as graphic organizers, sentence starters, prompt cards, technology and have multiple opportunities to practice new skills. Some classes use assistive technology programmatically and teachers pose questions to the class, but individual communication systems are inconsistently used to engage some students’ participation at the appropriate level of rigor. In addition, an inconsistent level of questioning does not always allow for multiple entry points for learning. In a few of the classrooms, this results in missed opportunities for promoting high levels of students’ critical thinking in different content areas.
- Deepen teachers’ responses to all student work to reflect guiding comments and levels of academic performance to convey clear next steps (2.2)
 - The school routinely administers curricular based pre- and post-assessments from the school’s chosen curriculum, in addition to NYS ELA and Math, Performance Series Assessment, NYSAA and SANDI/ FAST assessments. These results lead to adjustments in instructional plans. Consistently, student work products are graded using rubrics. Teachers use common four-point rubrics for assessments of student work products. Most rubrics assess the level of independence and accuracy of task completion, and others include meeting the expectations of the task and the associated standards. This provides teachers with targeted information related to student performance from specific learning activities, and guides instructional decisions such as which aids might be utilized to provide access for that learner. Work products are displayed on bulletin boards and within student work folders, reflect teacher comments that are specific to the task presented, but do not always offer next learning steps connected to the specific skills that learning tasks require students to demonstrate, lessening opportunities for students to understand what they need to improve in order to increase mastery of learning standards.
 - As most instruction is language-based, there are substantial opportunities for teachers to assess what their students understand through leveled questioning and exit slips that not only ask what the student learned, but what was confusing about the lesson. Checklists which are provided to promote achievement through small group instruction, as evidenced during classroom visits, routinely meets students at their level and targeted support is provided to improve achievement. Lessons are presented grounded to an explicitly stated learning objective that is aligned to the curricula. Teacher generated rubrics are attached as the grading system for all student writing tasks. Nonetheless, the provision of providing students with opportunities to self-assess, based on their cognitive levels, are not always in place, preventing some students from knowing their next learning steps, thus limiting the consistent ownership of progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Q075	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