



# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**The Seneca School**

**Q088**

**60-85 Catalpa Avenue  
Ridgewood  
NY 11385**

**Principal: Robert Quintana**

**Dates of review: March 17, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 88 is an elementary school with 1,110 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 55% Hispanic, 37% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's allocation of resources and scheduling maximizes opportunities for professional collaboration increasing student support and levels of performance. (1.3)
  - The principal effectively uses personnel to support the school's instructional goals to improve student learning. The administration assists in building teacher capacity in English language arts (ELA) and math during grade and professional development meetings through the use of the data specialist who provides salient support to teachers regarding assessment analysis that is used to plan for the creation of future tasks and curricular units aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Additionally, technology is being used as a tool to engage students during lessons. For example, the school piloted an interactive math software program that is common core aligned for 60 at-risk students. As a result, after 3 months one-third of the students are able to cycle out of the at-risk level and there is a stronger coherence of curriculum aligned to the standards which has shown improvement in student work. Furthermore, a second assistant principal was hired and teachers are receiving feedback from classroom observations in a timely way around student learning and professional growth, that supports the school's instruction goal to increase writing skills and academic achievement across all areas.
  - The current principal began in October, 2013 and after reviewing the school's schedule he suggested time for teacher teams to meet and align teaching strategies to support the schools' instructional goals to increase higher order questions and project based tasks. Teachers conscientiously meet on their lunch and preparation periods to plan, analyze data, review student work and discuss teaching practices. Teacher teams have worked copiously to target individual students, meet school goals and determine effectiveness of chosen curricula. As a result, teaching practices continue to show improvement in student work as reading levels are increasing according to Measures of Student Learning (MOSL).
- The school is a safe and respectful organization where students are deeply cared for and benefit from the levels of support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - One of the first initiatives for the principal was instituting a program entitled *Safe and Caring Schools*. This program supports a theory of action so that sound social and emotional learning practices that target self-awareness, relationship building and responsible decision making have a place in the daily lives of students. The effectiveness of this program has been showcased through improved student behavior, expanded cleanliness of the building, increased parent involvement and a strong buy-in from all members of the community that this is their school and they are proud that it stands for learning for all students. School improvement efforts are guided by students who posit that the

principal and staff “want to hear what kids have to say”. Students are eager to participate in ongoing safety patrol, cyber-bullying workshops and Respect for All week. Students agree that P.S. 88 has their best interests at heart and they feel fortunate to be part of this caring community. As a result, 98% of the student body surveyed agrees that they are meeting their goals because everyone is working as a strong, unified team.

- Students’ academic and personal behaviors are being impacted through several supports. This is evidenced through supports provided through the guidance counselor; administrative check-ins and teacher reach outs to parents through websites and the school’s *Partnering with Parents* program. Students are able to list several staff members they are able to seek assistance from, as needed, and they are aware of the importance of arriving to school every day on time and prepared to learn. One student stated that since Mr. Quintana became the principal students have taken a “silent oath to uphold the expectations that the principal has created”. Students feel safe and have learned to look to their peers, as well as the staff, for help and guidance. All students were part of an anti-bullying pledge that promised to value cultural and personal differences and treat others fairly with respect. A parent with former and current children attending this school says that this program has fostered an awareness that has never been part of the school’s culture. As a result, behavior occurrences have dropped dramatically by 7% within a year’s time and students feel part of a community with a greater cause to do well as a loyalty towards their school.
- School leaders and faculty collect and analyze data, and use common measurements that identify the needs of students with an awareness of adjusting curriculum and instruction for improved student performance. (2.2)
  - Enthusiastic teacher teams meet to review writing data and samples from their units of study and common core tasks. During these meetings they surface gaps and discuss trends in writing and teaching strategies for improvement, such as use math pictures to explain your thinking and use a question prompt to help supply key details from a text. Student writing is voluminous in quantity in classrooms and on presentation boards throughout the school. Teachers have developed a process of providing mindful and purposeful feedback to students and then have students comment on their next steps. Most students are able to discuss what they need to do next in order to increase their writing proficiency. Kindergarten students have benefitted from the feedback too, as their levels of growth have included improved listening skills and making connections to the topic.
  - One of the school’s goals, “To promote rigor in writing through citation of textual based evidence and the use of academic vocabulary, in addition to providing feedback aligned to the common core” is a path of progress throughout the grades. During classroom visits writing samples in fiction and non-fiction were available for review and students were able to discuss how their writing is assessed. One fifth grader referred to a common rubric he used for an informational essay and how the rubric’s components of introduction, body, transitions and conventions helped him develop his draft. The student stated that the rubric, “guided me towards a better paper because I knew what I had to

do to get a high grade". Additionally, teachers are adjusting curricula and instruction after preliminary data is reviewed. For example, one teacher, after analyzing students' writing drafts, adjusted the task by clarifying the directions and provided examples of criteria for topic selection and transitional sentences. As a result of these practices, teachers say they are more aware of students' needs and more comfortable creating tasks for their students that yield positive growth of skills taught.

## What the school needs to improve

- Further refine the alignment of curricula to instructional shifts and other engaging learning experiences that challenge all students, including those in mandated programs, in order to support increased learning. (1.1)
  - The school's curriculum is in developmental stages of becoming aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with a focus on meaningful groupings to improve students' reading and math proficiency levels. The implementation of the CCLS-aligned curricula *Ready Gen* and *Go Math* serves as additional support in the integration of standards. However, while there is a focus on improving writing skills, there is a lack of evidence that implementation of the instructional shifts across all grades is benefitting student progress. thus limiting opportunities for all students to advance toward college and career readiness skills and to decrease the achievement gap between the lowest and highest achieving students
  - Academic tasks and curricula reflect higher order thinking skills in some grades and content areas. In a science class students were working with a schematic design and open/closed circuits to determine which part of the circuit were the electrical receivers and in a fourth grade class students were using visual displays to help them better understand informational text. However, these practices are not yet transparent across all grades, subjects and mandated programs like English as a Second Language (ESL), Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), and cluster programs. As a result, all students are not always clear about why they are learning a topic or big ideas that can be synthesized and applied thus miss opportunities for deeper understanding and critical thinking in preparation for college and career skills.
- Strengthen the alignment of teacher practices with the school's beliefs on how students learn best enabling all learners to engage in complex tasks that provide leveled entry points for all students. (1.2)
  - The principal is beginning to cultivate a shared belief among the faculty to expand the use of strategic questioning, robust student discussions and varied activities to promote students' participation and development of critical thinking skills. The school's belief that students learn best when they are highly engaged, aware of their thinking and responsible for their learning are practices that are being developed through an awareness of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional

changes like developing tasks that create productive struggle for students. Currently, teaching practices reflect teacher directed lessons where students respond to directives and ask some questions, but mostly to the teacher. As a result, teachers' lesson details and summarizations tend to dominate lesson time creating uneven levels of student discourse and limited opportunities for student engagement for deep exploration necessary to meet needed levels of growth and achievement.

- The school is moving in a strong direction towards academic success as evidenced by the leadership role of teachers to learn about new strategies to help move students toward increased academic progress. However, at this time, implementation of strategies to meet relevant sub-groups' needs are not sufficiently transparent to ensure that all students have multiple entry points into the curriculum. Although some lessons include scaffolds such as graphic organizers, vocabulary support and small student groups, they are not consistently evident across classrooms. As a result, high levels of student engagement, participation and challenge are inconsistently provided throughout grade levels and classrooms prohibiting all students, including germane subgroups, from actively engaging in scaffolded learning tasks to support critical learning at their instructional levels.
- Use teacher observation data to design professional development that addresses individual teachers' needs and provides support for the consistent improvement of teacher practices and student work. (4.1)
  - A collaborative nature exists between the school's administration and the teachers, where everyone is a learner with intentions of developing a strong practice. The school supports teacher growth with alignment between initial planning conferences, instructional foci and school-wide goals. School leaders are committed to observing instruction on an average of three to five classrooms per day and providing teachers, including new teachers, with verbal feedback within 48 hours. Although feedback is provided to teachers to support their next steps, it does not provide written feedback around students' work and data, as evidenced in documented classroom observations. As a result, specific feedback cannot be linked to student success, thus creating a disconnect between what teachers need to do in order to improve instructional strategies.
  - The administration is moving toward supporting teachers and providing professional development around the work they are doing to achieve school goals. Professional development has been organized for the new Ready Gen reading curriculum and its implementation across the school. Professional development has included creating like-minded, collaborative student groups, using accountable talk, utilizing Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to include higher order questioning in discussions/tasks, referring to data to plan lessons and setting professional goals aligned to the Danielson framework. However, data from classroom observations is not used to develop a system for targeted individual professional learning opportunities and as a result, tracking of teachers' success is limited, making it difficult to determine teachers' instructional needs, succession plans and appropriate assignments for next year.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Seneca School P.S. 88	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<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?		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				
<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?				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				
<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?			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					
<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>