



**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

The Forest Park School

27Q097

**85-52 85th Street
Queens
NY 11421**

Principal: Marilyn Custodio

Dates of review: October 30-31, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Michele Lloyd-Bey

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Forest Park School is an elementary school with 705 students from pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 72% Hispanic, 3% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.20%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Across classrooms the school's common core aligned curricula and integrated instructional shifts encourage rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills to meet the needs of all learners. (1.1)
 - The school implements a new common core aligned curricular in reading and math for the 2013 school year. The leadership and teachers prepared themselves to support students by engaging in summer professional development. Lead teachers participated in external professional development, and then turn-keyed the information related to text-based evidence and improving their questioning techniques to support college readiness for all students to their colleagues in the school. The principal shared that the school continues to place strong focus on literacy and math, and all classes have a wide range of leveled texts. Teachers engage students in literacy lessons that are CCLS aligned to the balanced literacy model, with significant attention given to "guided reading". Across the school there is a focus on writing, and informational text, and students use various kinds of graphic organizers to capture text-based information. Furthermore, the leadership continues to build on the good work that they have accomplished in the previous year regarding the instructional shifts, and performance-based tasks. Teacher teams work collaboratively to make the necessary adjustments to curricular, and performance tasks, such as embedding academic vocabulary, thus ensuring college and career readiness and the school's integration of a common core curricular that is rigorous and engaging for all learners.
- The principal makes effective organizational decisions across the school that reflects instructional goals and support staff time and teacher assignments to improve instruction and engage all students in challenging academic tasks. (1.3)
 - The principal is responsive to the needs of the school, thus she uses the limited school budget to acquire resources that support students and staff. The science program is supported by an upper and lower grade teacher. According to the principal, technology is a vital component in teaching and learning, and SMART boards, computer generated programs, and devices support student motivation, and the English language arts and math programs. One of the principal's instructional goals is to improve teacher development, thus teachers receive ongoing professional development through in-house professional development facilitated by the leadership, and consultants that support them in their work in areas such as second language acquisition. The school's steady and targeted focus on professional development has enhanced teacher questioning and support the instructional shifts aligned with the CCLS. Furthermore, English language learners are well supported by four English as a Second Language licensed teachers, and academic support teachers who push directly into classrooms and provide small and individualized instruction

to students. As a result, teachers have clearly defined goals where they constantly measure student progress and their pedagogic practice of refining their questioning techniques have improved the performance of all students, but most notably the literacy and math performance of English language learners.

- The principal is reflective in her hiring practices, and stated that she makes hiring and organizational decisions that are best for her students. For example, since the grade 4 teacher is out on a leave, the principal assigned another teacher who previously taught grade 4 to the class. Teams of teachers are programmed to meet weekly. They work closely to analyze data, their pedagogy and make adjustments to curricular, such as modifying reading passages to better support English language learners and students with disabilities. One of the two science cluster teachers was assigned based on her previous effective teaching of the subject. As a result, groups of teachers collaborate weekly to focus on the instructional needs of students, and make purposeful instructional and organizational decisions that promote access to college and career readiness for all students, including English language learners, and students with disabilities.
- The school has created an effective system for monitoring the observation of teacher practice utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching and targeted pedagogical support for improved student outcomes. (4.1)
 - The leadership uses the observation of classroom practice to ensure alignment with the Danielson Framework of Teaching. The leadership's low-inference observation enables them to have effective conversations with teachers regarding their strengths, areas for instructional improvement, and targeted next steps. The principal indicated that professional development is derived from the school goals, the Danielson Framework and the observation of teacher practice. Effective feedback to teachers is shared immediately in both verbal and written form. Feedback is conducted as post-observation conferences and allows teachers, including those new to the school, the profession or the grade to reflect on their current pedagogy as well as previous suggestions for improvement. Consequently, the school's consistency and frequency of classroom observation practice, and focused conversations with teachers result in improved pedagogical practices.
 - The principal met with all teachers for the initial planning conferences, and the principal's schedule delineates times that teachers are to be observed. During the principal's time with teachers, teachers shared the observation option they want to participate in for the upcoming year. Furthermore, teachers completed a reflection survey, where they conveyed the kinds of professional development they believe will improve their instructional practice, such as implementing the early grade phonics program, and using technology in the classroom. Additionally, the principal has been successful in promoting leadership competencies of her staff by allowing them to engage in quasi-supervisory roles, such as the position of a grade leader, team facilitator, and lead teacher. As a result, many teachers in the school hold administrative licenses, and one special education teacher was

recently selected through the C-30 process to serve as an assistant principal in a neighboring school.

- The school's culture of positive student and staff attitudes results in an atmosphere that is mutually respectful and fosters academic and social-emotional growth. (1.4)
 - The school has an excellent tone and climate where all students are well respected and welcome. Monthly opportunities for students to participate in citizen of the month and attendance assemblies support students' social-emotional development. Students' comment that lessons learned in class about bullying has helped create a "non-bullying" school, where they feel safe. Students also stated that their teachers guide them in knowing exactly what they need in order to succeed in school. For example, students indicated that they engage in many science experiments, and participate in annual science fairs in order to prepare them for college. As a result, the school meets their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in science each year. Furthermore, teachers advise students regarding various websites, and computer software that will improve their research performance in areas such as social studies. In order to support the school further in meeting its goals, the guidance counselor and the parent coordinator provide exemplary support for parents, including parents of English language learners, and students with disabilities by offering them ongoing professional development in the CCLS and in both English and Spanish. There are clear and established attendance procedures to ensure that student attendance continues to improve. For example, the school is part of a pilot for attendance through the *Mayor's Task Force*, which began in the 2012-2013 school year. Students who have been targeted for the program receive early morning wake-up phone calls from "Wake Up NYC", an initiative from Mayor Bloomberg, with familiar celebrity voice recordings encouraging students to wake up and get to school. School based Success Mentors demonstrate care and concern by meeting with and encouraging students who have chronic absences to come to school. The ongoing emphasis on the personalization of student attendance results in steady and continuous improved data. During the 2012-2013 school year, 90 of 700 students had an average of 20 absences compared to the start of the 2013-2014 school year where the average student absence for 700 students is only 2 per month.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen differentiation of instruction to ensure that all learners are provided with consistent learning experiences, informed by the Danielson Framework to push their thinking and reflect high levels of student participation. (1.2)
 - Across the school, there is a common belief system about how students learn best. Teachers engage students in a balanced literacy model where teachers work with students in focused small guided reading groups and hone their skills in comprehension. Furthermore, teachers plan coherent lessons that reflect the components of the Danielson Framework for teaching, and the CCLS instructional shifts. Key

instructional strategies such as questioning are intentionally implemented in some grades across the school, and align with curricular in all subjects. For example, in a grade three class, students were engaged in a text-based English language arts lesson based on the book, *Thunder Cake*, by Patricia Polacco. The teacher asked several questions that challenged students to use critical thinking skills. Students read aloud, identified text-based evidence techniques, used the SMART board for reinforcement, and engaged in partner-talk experiences. The teacher encouraged students to build upon the strengths of their peers by allowing them to call on peers to support them in answering higher-level questions. Multiple entry points for all students were designed in the teachers' plans, and reflected in the appropriate pacing and structure of the lesson. However, that kind of high level student engagement was not evident in all grades and classrooms. As a result, although many teachers plan effective lessons that embed the instructional shifts, not all lessons reflect the instructional shifts that allow different pathways for students to understand curricular based on their diverse needs.

- Deepen the use of assessment practices and ongoing checks for understanding in order to have a clear portrait of student mastery to meet the learning needs of all learners. (2.2)
 - The school uses common assessments, rubrics, writing prompts, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricular in all subject areas. The principal and teachers share that the school's new instructional programs in reading and math offer a wealth of assessments that teachers modify as appropriate to meet the needs of their students. In addition, teacher teams analyze assessment data for patterns and trends in student performance, particularly in English language arts and math. In contrast, their analysis of student writing found that many students were lifting word for word from the text and using the information in their writing. They also found that students need more process writing to improve their writing mechanics. In reading and math, teachers identified a need to support students' understanding of test questions better. Teachers concluded that they would develop "close reading" strategies to support students achieve in this area. Furthermore, teachers assess students regularly through frequent checks for understanding, benchmark assessments, questioning, performance tasks, and conferencing. During a grade five math lesson, the teacher asked students to "turn and talk" to their partner about estimating numbers to the nearest hundreds. Throughout the lesson, students shared their thinking about how they solved the problems, and compared their answers to that of their partner's. Across grades and classrooms, teachers use questioning as an indicator to determine students' understanding of the lesson. However, while all teachers use some form of checks for understanding, students are not typically involved in helping to establish assessments for their own work. Consequently, teachers limit their ability to make effective adjustments and enable all students to be aware of their next steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Forest Park 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