



**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

Patricia Larkin

Elementary School 129

**128-02 7th Avenue
Queens
NY 11356**

Principal: Marilyn Alesi

Dates of review: December 17 - 18, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Arisleyda A. Ureña

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Patricia Larkin is an elementary school with 1,089 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 53% Hispanic, 16% White, and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 12% 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 94.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers routinely create and effectively deliver standards-aligned units of study in accordance with the school beliefs, requiring students to engage in higher order thinking that results in increased levels of achievement. (1.2)
 - The principal states that all students including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) learn best when they can use the language of the content and have opportunities to share their thinking. To this end, across classrooms, teachers use Goldmandeur-Rutherford's approach to provide visual cues for students who need additional scaffolds. Across grades and subjects, meetings are held to discuss assessments and their item analyses to refine unit plans thus building additional scaffolds and learning activities to support individual student's learning needs. Additionally, in every classroom visited, students engaged in turn-and-talk activities to discuss higher order questions. In an English language art (ELA) class students used a question for a reading analysis activity, "How does the author explain scientific concepts in the texts?" to engage in high-level discussions. In this activity, students discussed with a partner various text-based evidence to support their answers to the question, and used a class rubric to disagree or agree. Students across the classrooms observed were able to articulate the content topic they were learning about, the skills set they were practicing, and the specific reason why they turn-and-talk in every class. For example, one student shared that she was practicing synthesis skills, and "this is a high skill for a fourth grader to learn." As a result, teaching practices and teacher discussions across the school support their beliefs in a coherent manner.
 - Classroom lessons reflect the school wide belief of teaching students to be self-confident, independent thinkers, and insightful citizens. Students said they are "getting college ready because they are practicing skills needed in college for example, peer-editing, group discussions, partner work, partner and group feedback, essay writing, presentations, projects, and research study." In a fourth grade English language arts class, students applied close reading skills to identify the texts' main ideas and proceeded by comparing and contrasting readings about Joints and Skeletons in varied resources. In a math class, the students had a mini-lesson on the distributive property for multiplication, and proceeded to work in their assigned groups to identify different methods for solving multiplication problems while answering open-ended and reflective questions. Across classrooms and grades, students were consistently involved in thinking and contributing to high-level discussions. All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, engaged in cognitively challenge learning activities. As a result, the 2012-2013 Progress report score on middle school readiness is 96.8% compare to the City average of 93.2%.
- The principal's strategic use of organizational resources, teacher time, and student programs, supports the school's instructional goals, with emphasis on further improving student performance. (1.3)

- School leadership design the school's program based on observable teachers' strengths, students' needs, and grade level needs to develop coherence to support the school's instructional goals. Grade teams and academic intervention providers meet several times during the week for inquiry work. The school's schedule allows teachers to have common preparation and lunch hours for additional meeting time. Cross-grade monthly meetings provide teachers time to identify best practices and make inter-grade connections to accelerate school wide learning outcomes. Department meetings focus their work on examining content skills, performance tasks, and CCLS to develop high-level tasks with access points for all learners. In addition, the school administration made the decision to hire a leave-replacement teacher for supplementary academic services, thus ensuring that students have uninterrupted instruction. Furthermore, the school administration uses a system of color-coded cards to capture individual student's biographical, academic, and social-emotional data to ensure that students and teachers are set for success. Similarly, grade teams meet with guidance counselors, the Response to Intervention (RTI) committee, and the administration, to develop intervention plans and track students' progress and the performance of targeted students in each subject area. Thus teachers' intense focus on attainment of the school's instructional goals, along with holding themselves accountable for the progress of individual students, leads to students completing high quality work, as evidenced by class discussions, students' work portfolios, and individual learning goals.
- School leaders foster a culture of high expectation and accountability among staff, parents, and students, to build a shared understanding for learning, resulting in students' progress towards those expectations. (3.4)
 - The school administration and teachers aligned the school's report card to the CCLS in order to communicate succinct information about academic and behavioral expectations. In addition, the school administration and teachers use interim progress reports, writing celebrations, and student portfolios, to further communicate students' academic performance and progress. Furthermore, student council representatives describe a poster contest as a means used to communicate the school's learning goals. A winning poster stated, "Close Reading + Stamina + Communicating + Thinking = Imagination—Even the Greatest Villains are Reading These Days." In the large student meeting, fourth graders explained how the math teachers use "play money to teach us personal finance to get us prepared for college and life." As a result, in both teacher meetings, teachers stated "that they feel personally responsible for their students' learning and academic achievement," also evidenced by their participation in developing and leading various school's committees.
 - The administration, parent coordinator, and teachers, conduct on-going training for parents and families about CCLS, the format, and content for the new State assessments, the school's goals, the new teacher evaluation system, middle school application, and grade succession, curriculum and planning, and student progress. The school's leadership team (SLT) develops learning opportunities for parents and students by developing partnerships with community based organizations,

professionals, and museums, thus contributing to the school's expectations for learning outcomes. Parents expressed that the "School is a second home, the expectations are the same, and our children know that they are going to college." Parents further stated that having their children set goals for their learning is excellent and that "Everyone should do the same." Teachers and parents are in constant communication through texting, phone calls, emails, meetings, school events, and mail. Parents described the school as "rigorous," and further specified that they are very familiar with the CCLS expectations, accountability, and academic language. This is evident by the school's increased score on the School Survey for communication, from 7.5 in 2011-2012 to 8.9 in 2012-2013.

- School leaders consistently use data from classroom observations, and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, to provide meaningful feedback to teachers and develop professional growth, leading to improved teaching practice. (4.1)
 - The school administration and teachers triangulate data from observation reports, peer-feedback, student work, and assessment results, to strategically inform professional development and next steps for improving teaching practice. Teachers stated that administrators provide immediate targeted feedback through individual conversations followed with next steps aligned to teacher's professional goals. In a teacher meeting, a first year teacher said that the school administration provided additional mentoring, coaching, and targeted professional development workshops to support her instructional practice to increase differentiation and student engagement. Also, a teacher shared how after a classroom observation, a supervisor noted that students were not questioning each other and feedback focused on developing the teacher's "role as a facilitator by leading less." The teacher said that the strategy had an immediate impact on students' abilities to question each other, thus resulting in increased student engagement. In addition, written observation reports give teachers specific feedback on areas of strength, and areas in need of improvement aligned to a specific competency of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Recommendations include: meeting with administration to discuss specific teaching strategies; scheduling one-on-one meetings with coaches from the support network (CFN) for professional development on English as a second language (ESL) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL); meeting with educational consultants to receive further support with Ready Gen or Go Math; and organizing inter-visitations with an option to conduct a video lesson study. To quote some teachers, they describe their learning experiences as "supportive and professional," "collaborative and rigorous," "organized and involved," and "flexible." An analysis from Advance data indicates that 92 of 100 observations reports indicate that teachers are effective and highly effective for competency 3b using questioning and discussion techniques.
- Across the school, teacher teams engage in well-structured inquiry-based professional collaborations to strengthen instructional capacity and develop teacher leadership, resulting in improved student learning. (4.2)
 - Teacher meetings are scheduled to discuss units, lessons, student work, and performance tasks. The fourth grade teacher team meeting engaged

in a calibration activity using two pieces of student work, the English language arts CCLS, and the rubric used for the assignment, to further align their evaluation of students' skills to CCLS across the grade level. Teachers discussed the English language arts rubric from Ready Gen and agreed to work in a revision that will include adding additional layers of scaffolds for students who are below proficiency level without shifting the CCLS alignment. In a similar protocol, the first grade team analyzed student work from two students to identify scaffolds and intervention strategies to support student learning in a new unit of study. Teachers identified English as a second language (ESL) and special education strategies to further adjust the learning activities and unit plans for the marking period, thus increasing students' capacity to achieve CCLS aligned tasks.

- School administration and teachers engage in professional collaborations to make strategic school wide decisions for curricula, interventions, assessments, and professional development. For example, teachers and administrators shared the need to establish professional development, grading policy, behavior management, Response to Intervention (RIT), safety, and school leadership committees, to ensure efficacy and efficiency for accomplishing the school's goals. For example, one teacher shared her experience as a member of the Response to Intervention committee, and said that this work has supported her work in providing support to individual students. Teachers stated how everyone takes a turn in coordinating and organizing teacher meetings and in-house professional development. For example, teachers attended professional development workshops on the Ready Gen and Go Math curricula and developed school wide professional development to increase instructional capacity and professional growth amongst teachers. Teachers' active participation in school wide decision processes, teacher team meetings, school committees contribute to strong leadership skills where teachers positively impact student achievement. This is evident by the school's increased score on the Progress Report for Hispanic males in lowest third Citywide, from 36.8% in 2011-2012 to 75% in 2012-2013.

What the school needs to improve

- Further the refinement of curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts across all subjects to deepen cognitive engagement for all learners. (1.1)
 - While the English language arts and math curricula is aligned to the CCLS, the curricula for social studies and science do not fully integrate CCLS and instructional shifts. There is a strong focus on college and career readiness skills in all grades, with units emphasizing tasks that require students to read and cite evidence from texts to support ideas and arguments, discuss their work with peers, and make class presentations. For instance, a fifth grade lesson had students working with partners to gather information about rain forests by them using multiple texts to support their answers with evidence. However, while students engaged in high-level discussions and rigorous tasks across classrooms, higher achievers were not always provided with meaningful extensions. In the parent meeting, some parents shared that their children were higher

achievers, and would like the school to regularly integrate extensions to further challenge their children's thinking.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Patricia Larkin	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