



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Ronald McNair

PS-MS Q147

**218-01 116 Avenue
Queens
NY 11411**

Principal: Anne Cohen

Dates of review: April 23-24, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS/MS 147 is an elementary-middle school with 709 students from pre-k through grade 8. The school population comprises 94% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) offer all students opportunities to be immersed in engaging academic tasks across disciplines thus promoting career and college readiness. (1.1)
 - Common Core aligned curricula such as *Ready Gen* for English language Arts and *Go Math* for K-5 students, combined with *Code X* for English language arts and *CMP3* for math instruction at the middle school level, support the integration of the instructional shifts across content areas. In the lower grades, the emphasis is on improving vocabulary acquisition, while for the upper grades, the emphasis is on students citing evidence from texts to support responses to questions. Social studies and science curricula follow New York State scope and sequence, and grade-specific content in these disciplines is infused through tasks that require all students to engage in reading across the content areas, thus contributing to coherence of instruction from grade-to-grade. A “Book of the Month” initiative further promotes coherence of curricula, with staff and students reading and discussing the same book, as part of instructional units across content areas. As a result, all students have access to standards-based curricula that support college and career readiness.
 - All teachers meet regularly with administrators, network specialists, peers, and the school’s four Instructional Leads, to examine student work and data in order to develop units of study to engage all learners in rich learning tasks. As teachers look at student work, they identify students’ skill deficits in order to develop tasks that are engaging yet challenging for all learners. In addition, at grade meetings they cite evidence from student work in order to revise tasks to incorporate needed scaffolds for struggling learners. Teacher teams also create instructional plans by grade, with a focus on differentiated tasks to ensure full access to curricula for English language learners and students with disabilities. The Instructional leads collaborate with administrators in disseminating data from assessments, thus informing the selection of curriculum materials and design of engaging learning tasks for instruction in all disciplines.
- School leaders and staff effectively communicate high expectations to students, and families, with targeted supports for attaining them, in order to accelerate students’ progress towards college and career readiness. (3.4)
 - The principal clearly articulates high expectations for all staff members through discussions at faculty conferences, bulletins, memos, individual and team conversations, and professional development packets that detail areas of emphasis related to instruction and professional development. Observation reports also highlight specific requirements for teachers to improve their instructional practice in alignment to the tenets of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Administrators also meet regularly with teachers to engage them in self-assessment of their pedagogical skills, thus contributing to their understanding of areas for

improvement. Through these structures, administrators provide supports that promote shared accountability for staff and student learning.

- Parents report that staff members invite them to participate in discussions of learning goals for their children, promotion requirements, and options to engage their children in advanced level work. Tools such as a newsletter, an events calendar, postings on the school's website, and School Messenger calls, keep families up-to-date on school events, such as the recent "Parents as Partners Week" and workshops provided by the parent coordinator for all families to help their children succeed in school. Progress reports and conferences with teachers foster ongoing communication with families about students' performance and any steps needed to help students master learning goals. One parent noted that the recent opening of a College and Career Readiness Center (CCRC) brought many parents to the school to learn about high school and college readiness expectations for their children. Through these supports and feedback, the school ensures that families understand what students must do in order to be on track to meet expectations for their promotion and make progress towards college and career readiness goals.
- School leaders utilize the Danielson Framework to build a shared understanding of pedagogy, with cycles of feedback that support all teachers in strengthening their pedagogical practices and content knowledge. (4.1)
 - A review of observation reports shows that, through frequent formal and informal observations, administrators consistently provide detailed feedback, including next steps, guiding teachers on how to improve their pedagogy. School leaders align feedback to individual teacher's areas of need, based on findings from student work and data. For example, based on an analysis of students' writing samples from performance tasks, the principal determined that some teachers needed to improve their proficiency in designing rigorous tasks and recommended specific steps that targeted that competency. Administrators share their feedback with network specialists and instructional leads who also engage individual teachers in discussions of their areas of strength as well as areas of growth, thus improving their understanding of how to improve their instructional practice. New teachers receive additional feedback on their performance from mentors. Thus, all teachers are constantly provided with effective feedback to accelerate their professional growth.
 - Based upon the Danielson Framework for Teaching, administrators provide teachers with feedback that clearly outlines next steps for improving their practice. For example, observation reports and data from the Advance teacher evaluation portal show ratings of individual teachers across competencies from the Danielson Framework for Teaching, with detailed next steps for teachers to improve in areas such as engaging students in learning and implementing effective questioning strategies. The accuracy of feedback is further informed by analysis of student work and data from each teacher's self-assessment survey, which illumine areas of need for both students and teachers. In addition, the principal and assistant principal often conduct formal and informal classroom visits together, norming their understanding of individual teacher needs and strengths to ensure accuracy and coherence of their feedback. Thus, all teachers are supported by feedback loops that communicate clear expectations for improving their pedagogy.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy to ensure instruction that consistently challenges all students to participate in discussions and engage in higher order thinking that results in high quality work products. (1.2)
 - In some classrooms, teachers assign rigorous tasks, requiring students to read texts and cite evidence from multiple texts to responding to questions. For example, in an English language arts class, the teacher asked students to use textual evidence from related nonfiction articles to respond to the question, “Is Graffiti Art?” In other classrooms, teachers worked with students in groups, clarifying lesson concepts through questioning. However, across classrooms, lessons did not consistently demonstrate multiple entry points to meet students’ diverse needs, with all students working on the same task in most cases. Further, student engagement in challenging tasks was not evident across classrooms, as in some cases, tasks did not elicit higher order thinking. For example, in an eighth grade math class, groups of students were asked to work for 30 minutes to solve one math problem, with one group having the task of determining the height of a cone shaped paper cup, given a diameter of 8 centimeters and a volume of 48 cubic centimeters. Consequently, not all students benefit from instruction that offers them demanding tasks.
 - In some classrooms lessons foster lively discussions, as teachers provide prompts in questioning students and students engage in “turn-and-talk,” to work with peers in discussing a specific topic or solving problems. For example, in a social studies lesson, students worked in groups to read three nonfiction selections about different routes taken by explorers in the California Gold Rush and decide which was the best route and why, leading to a quiet hum of conversations across the classroom. However, in several other classrooms, lessons were teacher-dominated, with students passively listening to the teacher or to a few peers who were called upon. For example, in a class of students with disabilities, the teacher asked students to read short excerpts of texts and a few volunteers responded to three low level questions about the text. As a result, there are missed opportunities to ensure that all students participate regularly in discussions, with peer-to-peer interactions that deepen their learning, as evident in their work products.
- Strengthen assessment practices to consistently generate data-driven feedback on student progress, to staff and students, resulting in effective adjustments to curriculum and instruction that address students’ needs. (2.2)
 - Teachers use common department and grade level baseline assessments to evaluate students’ learning needs across subjects. For example, Fountas and Pinnell assessments complement embedded assessments in units from the selected core texts, providing data for analyses by teachers and administrators. Teachers utilize protocols to analyze the data and student work products, outlining strengths and next steps based on their findings. However, while some teachers use assessment data to inform their practice, their approach is limited to identifying the needs of individual students, especially those in the extended day program. Consequently, not all teachers are routinely

making changes to tasks or their instructional practice, thus limiting students' progress towards learning goals.

- In most classrooms teachers monitored students while they worked, providing support for task completion. A few teachers recorded their observations and used them to drive follow up questioning or clarification of teaching points. However, checks for understanding, leading to adjustments to instruction during the teaching period, were not consistently evident across classrooms. For example, in several classrooms, disengaged students received little or no attention from the teacher, with one student stating that he did not know what to do and another saying he was waiting for the teacher to finish working with other students in small groups. Further, across classrooms, there was limited evidence of ongoing assessment via peer assessment, self- assessment, and/or turn-and-talks. Therefore, not all students benefit from assessment practices that accurately pinpoint their needs and result in timely modifications of instruction to accelerate their learning.
- Refine goal-setting systems to include additional ways in which to engage all members of the school community in monitoring school improvement goals, leading to rapid progress in attaining those goals. (3.1)
 - Based on school data, several goals are outlined in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) to drive school improvement. The goals include decreasing incidents of misconduct and improving achievement by all students. In addition, based on the instructional expectations embedded in the Advance teacher evaluation system, teachers collaborated with administrators to set goals to improve their practice, as related to targeted domains of the Danielson Framework. . However, while there is some tracking of instructional goals via reviews of observation data, extended day data, and student progress reports, there is little evidence of tracking related to other school improvement goals. Furthermore, minutes of meetings show little focus on adjustments of goals as necessary to ensure their attainment, especially with regard to goals targeting gains in student achievement. As a result, timely adjustments to goals are not the norm, adversely impacting efforts to enhance students' academic and social-emotional growth.
 - Parents reported that through Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings, they provided input in discussions to secure and expend funds for instructional initiatives, including the addition of the CCRC and the purchase of technology equipment and other resources to improve the school. School staff reported that they help to make decisions about additional support for struggling students and refinement of curricula to ensure CCLS aligned instruction for all students. Middle school students stated that through Town Hall meetings, they get input in discussions of school improvement plans. However, elementary school students stated that they do not participate in any meetings with school leaders. Further, school documents, including professional development records and minutes of teacher team, PTA and SLT meetings, do not indicate engagement of all school community members in decision-making. Thus, school level decision-making is not well informed by input from all constituent groups, limiting the school's capacity to leverage their contributions to ensure attainment of school improvement outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Ronald McNair	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