

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Maspeth School

24Q153

**60-02 60th Lane
Maspeth
NY
11378**

Principal: Susan Bauer

Dates of review: November 25-26, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS 153 is an elementary school with 1,451 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 0.60% Black, 48.2% Hispanic, 44% White, and 6.8% Asian students. The student body includes 11.3% English language learners and 11.3% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.3 %.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school aligns curricula to key standards and offers meaningful learning experiences that promote rigor to improve student learning. (1.1)
 - Teachers follow *Ready Gen* reading and writing units of study with a close focus on guided reading to determine and advance students' independent reading levels. In math, teachers have received professional development with the *Go Math* curriculum incorporating more opportunities for instructional shifts like math fluency and productive struggle to help ensure that students develop a deeper understanding of math problem solving. The structured, repetitive and comprehensive reading curriculum *Soar to Success* is in place for Students with Disabilities (SWD) so that students can gain confidence in reading on grade level text. Therefore, curriculum maps are in place in math and English language arts (ELA) with mindful decisions about integrating Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). As a result the principal reports that students are more engaged based on their ability to defend a statement with evidence from text and better equipped to answer higher order thinking questions.
 - Across classrooms, teachers seek to increase rigor of what students know and can do by revising elements of ELA and math units to align with the CCLS. In the lower grades students are using academic vocabulary to retell a story and in the upper grades students are comparing three similar texts and then creating their own short story using a character from one of the texts by developing a new challenge that they face. Some students have the option of developing an original story that features new characters and circumstances. As a result of the success of these rigorous practices, 98% of second graders tested in the Foundations program made progress on the DIBELS assessment by increasing one level in reading. The upper grade students have been challenged to deeper thinking by creating character traits and motives for original stories, based on texts they have read. (b)
- Teaching practices across the school reflect a common belief about student learning and consistently provide purposeful supports to meet varied student needs. (1.2)
 - Teachers consistently align curricula and instructional goals of the Danielson Framework with Common Core standards and they demonstrate the belief that students favor learning through active participation and small groups. Instructional shifts in developing the skill of using evidence to support arguments in discussion is beginning to show results in the writing of the upper school students. The school has been involved in a Title III program where students study different artists with a focus on vocabulary development within a specific art genre. Through pre and post response writing, 68% of the participants made one year of growth in reading within the 10 weeks of the program. Furthermore, 36% of the students scored a level of proficiency on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) and 17% scored a Level 3 on the New York State ELA test.

- Classroom teachers use a variety of assessment results to determine flexible grouping for instruction. Teachers model skills like explaining the process of thinking when more than one response is possible and using reasoning, planning and evidence to draw conclusions. Incorporating the *Socratic seminar* across classrooms and grades, there has been evidence of deep levels of student thinking enabling students to engage in high-leveled classroom tasks and discussions through this teaching method. The school is in its third year of a grant and partnership with the New York State Initiative on Emerging Bilinguals where the philosophy involves trans-languaging; a celebration of being bilingual and using the skills one has from their first learned language to become proficient in another language. Strategies such as language prompts, shades of meaning and frontloading vocabulary have yielded positive outcomes. The school has found that all students involved in this program have shown no signs of slippage of proficiency and 80% of English Language Learners (ELLs) have increased in proficiency on the NYSESLAT and on the item analysis results for the ELA state exam.
- School leaders organize resources and time in order to support instructional goals and increase student outcomes. (1.3)
 - Since this school does not receive Title I funds, organizational decisions and resources are carefully executed so programs that are invested in support of all students. A Reading Recovery program has been implemented in contrast to last year's Achieve 300 on-line program. In addition, the school hired English as a second language (ESL) teacher who speaks polish, in order to embrace the changing population of the school. This has increased parent involvement and engagement at family learning sessions. The school has also instituted a departmentalized program for grade 6, so that students are exposed to content that *expert* pedagogues are teaching. As a result of these practices thus far, running records for ELL students have shown an increase between one and fourteen reading levels since September of this year.
 - Teachers meet several times a week by grade for curriculum planning, developing tasks and looking at students' work. Teachers agree that this prioritized meeting time has had a positive impact on their collaborative efforts, assisting them with creating tasks that are challenging for all students and focusing on their own personal and professional goals. Teacher teams have used a good portion of their time developing math tasks that show deep understanding of the concepts and applying the tasks to everyday situations. Through a math tracker, Grade 2 Math Trimester results show that the majority of students are proficient in concepts like estimating lengths in feet, using angles in real life situations and interpreting bar and picture graphs. In grade four, through the implementation of *close* reading in math, outcomes have yielded signs of student growth; out of 32 students, 21 increased in proficiency and 11 remained the same.
- School administrators conduct observations and provide teachers with feedback derived from a shared teaching framework and analysis of student data to elevate instructional practices school-wide. (4.1)

- Using the new ADVANCE system, to support effective teaching, the administration visits classrooms routinely to observe teaching practices such as talking prompts, turn and talk, discussion techniques, self assessing with peers and assessment learning through checklists and rubrics. Elements of lesson plans aligned to students' needs and work samples are reviewed and incorporated into the feedback process. Articulated next steps provide timely feedback for teacher development, For example, a review of recommendations in observations reflects that teachers are encouraged to help students identify possible interpretations of text and engage them in more critical thinking questions to support their writing. This has resulted in numerous staff members showing professional growth in planning coherent instruction and using student data to drive instruction relative to the research-based instructional foundation the school has provided.
- Prioritized competencies, like discussion and questioning techniques, are areas the administration highlights during classroom visits to identify where a teacher's practice falls within the four domains of the Danielson teaching Framework continuum. There is also a system in place to track the progress of improved instructional practices over time. This enables teachers to know where they were and how they are progressing relative to desired practices. Descriptive details on strengths, challenges and suggestions for growth accompany the feedback in addition to a date for coach and peer support. This work has ensured school leaders to be aware of teachers' targeted goals and be able to identify purposeful professional development trends helping teachers to improve. Consequently, pedagogy across classrooms is gaining coherence as evidenced by more frequent use of specific targeted strategies like the *Socratic* seminar, student self-assessment and thoughtful peer discussion.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the alignment of assessments and rubrics to curricula to offer actionable feedback, identify student achievement trends and inform effective instructional adjustments to meet all students' needs. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams and individual teachers realize the importance of common assessments and embrace the work in an attempt to inform their instruction. Rubrics are available across grades for assessing students' written work. Although rubrics are aligned to the curriculum there is a disconnect between the feedback that teachers are offering and the way students are interpreting the feedback in regard to moving towards their next steps. For example, when asks about next steps most students speak in general terms and do not refer to the feedback teachers have cited. As a result of this gap it is difficult to ascertain which students are progressing in writing and how to quantify their progress towards student achievement.
 - The school uses a plethora of common assessments, like New York State test scores, Math Fact Tracker and New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) scores, to better understand students' progress in reading and mathematics. During cabinet and team

meetings this data is reviewed, but there is no a transparent or articulated way to connect the data trends to adjustments in curriculum and instruction. For example, current first grade data reveals a decline in students reading levels from last June to present day. Although the data is available and the trends are communicated, classroom and ancillary teachers (push-in and special education support) are still in the process of developing ways to use the results of these assessments to pinpoint modifications in instruction and the curriculum. As a result, the lack of an articulated process to evaluate data trends hinders teachers' ability to inform adjustments to curriculum and instruction that are specific to students' learning needs.

- Extend the work of engaging in structured professional collaborations using an inquiry approach to improve teacher practice, track student progress and promote achievement of school goals. (4.2)
 - Teachers work together at least twice a week to analyze student work and revisit curriculum plans. The *Go Math* curriculum has a series of assessments, like the prerequisite skills test, the chapter performance task and pre/post tasks. Although data is collected around these assessments there are gaps when teachers connect the results to the inquiry approach that is being addressed. As a result, students' instructional needs are not directly addressed through instructional changes during the inquiry process.
 - Teams of teachers meet regularly to review the results of assessment data from the English language arts benchmark aligned to the school's literacy program, *ReadyGen*. The teams have just adopted a tuning protocol so that teachers can share their practices with colleagues. The teams discuss the findings from their own classes, but are still developing a system to change instructional practices based on a targeted population from the grade. Currently, a sub-population is in the process of being highlighted; consequently results about student progress are not available on the grade level, making it difficult to determine which teaching strategies are yielding successful outcomes. Thus, at this time, teams are not able to move forward in improving instructional practices for all groups of students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Maspeth 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