

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Fresh Meadows

Elementary School 173

**67-10 173rd Street
Fresh Meadows, NY 11365**

Principal: Molly Wang

Dates of review: February 26 - 27, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.- Gorski

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Fresh Meadows is an elementary school with 961 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 10%Hispanic, 27% White, 1% multi-racial, and 60% Asian students. The student body includes 11% 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 96.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's deliberate curricula alignment to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts ensures that its refining of academic tasks and access engages students in deep reasoning. (1.1)
 - Administrators, lead teachers, grade-level teachers, and a Teachers College staff developer examine the units of study to secure alignment to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Similarly, the school has chosen the Envision math program for its inquiry approach requiring students to solve problems and engage in deep understanding of math concepts, which complemented by the school's math assessment exemplars, provides a full picture of a well aligned curricula. Teachers dissect units of study and curriculum maps to plan a calendar of units that depict a variety of literacy genres and thoughtfully integrate the instructional shifts, balancing fiction and non-fiction texts. The wide-ranging classroom library collections carefully selected and composed of reading levels, content areas, and interest levels, support student comprehension and assist teachers in grounding students in literacy and math via independent reading and during the read aloud time. Units of study include an assortment of anthologies, read alouds, biographies, nonfiction, fantasy, historical fiction, and selected mentor texts aligned to literacy instruction. Additionally, curriculum maps across subject areas exhibit a unit of study, goals for the unit, highlighted standards, activities, materials, and assessments. Moreover, lesson plans consist of key standards, a teaching point, and question scaffolds, multiple points of access, data-based groups, and assessments. An essential question that is built-in to prompt guiding questions links to the prior day's lesson to facilitate comprehension. Thus, carefully planned curricula with student data at the forefront of planning results in coherence across the school to encourage college and career readiness for all students.
 - The school works closely with the New Teacher Center and Network achievement coaches to refine academic tasks via analysis of student work products. For example, a close look at student work has deepened the mode of examining student-writing products as teachers realize the importance of delving deeper into student data to understand their needs. Therefore, the resolve to increase student vocabulary banks was an outgrowth of granular analyses of student work samples, providing findings that indicated that groups of students exhibit a need for acquisition of academic vocabulary. Thus, all teachers intentionally revise curricula focusing on vocabulary development, with a keen eye towards supporting students of the Dual Language Program. This attention to academic vocabulary is resulting in second language learners and English proficient students improving contextual use of academic vocabulary, both verbally and in written form. Additionally, the analysis of science written tasks confirmed the need for discipline-specific vocabulary, leading to leadership's tactical decision that professional development would increase the school's capacity to meet this need. As a result, the science teacher is presently attending an institute entitled, "*Writing in the Content Area.*" Revisions of curricular are reflected in pacing calendars with rationales, such as, "extended time spent on the non-fiction unit to strengthen the skill of main idea and text structure skills." Likewise, teachers extended the persuasive and literary essay

unit to afford more time to writing instruction of text-based essay writing. These refinements are done periodically, thus ensuring that all students and relevant subgroups are engaged in tasks that prompt deep reasoning.

- Instructional practices across the vast majority of classrooms intentionally afford entry points that reflect the school's set of beliefs, higher-order thinking and participation, resulting in student ownership of the learning. (1.2)
 - School leaders, and faculty believe that students learn best when they have access to and are engaged in challenging content via the workshop model with explicit and direct instruction, and application of the learning at the student level. Further, the school believes that small group instruction is at the core of learning and it encourages peer questioning and discussion. Informed by the Danielson Framework for teaching, across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers' practices highlight and implement three components, questioning and discussions, student engagement, and the use of assessments. Similarly, teachers purposefully create learning environments, composed of small groups based on reading levels, language proficiency, and/or knowledge gaps. During classroom visits teachers engaged students in kinesthetic and auditory activities using manipulatives, computers, and audio-visual supports. Mini-lessons launched student discussions, student conferences, guided reading groups, and led students into interactive use of technology. Teachers also use an array of scaffolds and entry points to support student learning. For example, while visiting a fourth grade class it was noted that the lesson required students to make comparisons between themes and how characters within texts relate to themes across texts. From a book previously read in class, the teacher modeled a strategy on how she figured out the author's meaning and theme by looking at the culminating lesson evident at the end of the story. For this story the lesson was, *"In life we cannot judge someone just by looking at a few parts of their personality, you need to know them fully to really understand them"*. The teacher then informed the class that the information acquired, following the events throughout the story, is used to figure out the message the author is trying to convey. Students, working in partnerships, were sent to try out this strategy and jot down supporting text of their findings in their reading notebooks. Further support was included by the use of leveled bookmarks tailored to each student's reading level, with prompts phrased for each skill, to guide student thinking. Additionally, the teacher facilitated a small group to conduct a strategy lesson in identifying the theme and message by looking at the problem the character faced and the solution used to overcome the problem. Similar work across the school was noted during classroom visits so that all students reveal high levels of thinking and discussions exemplify student progress to increase student academic proficiency, and investment in learning as evidenced on hallway displays.
- The strategic use of resources supports organizational decisions that significantly contribute to the success of the school's instructional goals and engage all students in challenging tasks resulting in increased academic performance. (1.3)
 - The school coherency team composed of administrators, Teachers College staff developers, and grade-level teachers, meets once a month to discuss trends and school needs driven from teacher observations, student data, and parent feedback. During these meetings, suggestions for professional development, use of school resources, and revision to schedules and curricula are made;

evidencing that considerable monitoring of pedagogy is aligned to instructional goals and to student achievement. This careful planning promotes shared professional responsibilities while increasing teacher skills to further cultivate lead teachers and increase student achievement. Additionally, the leadership has thoughtfully scheduled grade-level teacher teams to meet twice a week to discuss student work and make instructional adjustments. For example, special education, integrated co-teachers, Dual Language teachers, and teachers of English language acquisition, share preparation periods to work on instructional plans that include scaffolds and entry points for all groups. Moreover, the school's partnership with New York University's (NYU) Reading Recovery Program provides coursework for one teacher, and one-to-one coaching per month. The teacher works with her coach to assess student progress, generate and adapt instruction and collaborate on best practices. The partnerships with Teachers College and NYU are focused on improving teaching practice and student achievement and support the instructional goals of increasing student literacy and math levels as evidenced on writing tasks and math exemplars, indicating progress toward meeting key standards.

- School leaders and faculty focus on a short list of school goals that are shared with the school community and monitored in efforts to support student academic achievement and personal behaviors. (3.1)
 - Grade-level teacher teams meet during the last month of the school year to share instructional reflections relative to English language arts, math, and the content areas. This process includes a comprehensive study of the curricula's rigor, instructional resources, and data analyses, as a framework to ensure that the organizational decisions meet school needs, and support student progress. Subsequently, the leadership attends grade-level monthly meetings, and discusses progress toward the school's instructional goals of student action plans in acquiring academic vocabulary, problem solving in math, and professional growth for teachers. Hence, the school's set of goals is crafted into a theory of action and incorporated into the school's Comprehensive Education Plan depicting extensive analyses of the school community's strengths and needs and leveraging changes to increase teacher capacity and accelerate student learning. Additionally, the school leadership communicates with the school community via grade-level meetings and monthly parent meetings to discuss student work, school programs, and data results. Also, the Book of the Month program affords teachers a copy of the monthly recommended book to read and encourage student conversations of numerous social-emotional topics and teach the importance of compassion and respect for everyone. Books that link social-emotional growth to literacy is supported by parents, therefore, the parent teacher association (PTA) decided to advertise the Book of the Month event and feature it in the school community news publication entitled, the Fresh Meadow Observer, which is published five times a year. Moreover, the school communicates with families, students, and school community via a monthly grade level newsletter which is also available on the PTA website. Translated versions of memos addressed to families regarding PTA meetings, major events, and workshops, are written in the community's languages. Further, families and community residents partake in a read-aloud activity for a class of their choice at the school's yearly, Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R.) event in April to celebrate the birthday of a well-known, children's books author, Beverly Cleary. Accordingly, the school effectively communicates and involves its constituencies

in shared curricula decisions, and supporting school initiatives, thus improving student achievement and personal growth across the school.

- Teacher teams meticulously examine student work and classroom practice and build instructional capacity, resulting in shared improved teacher practice leading students toward mastery of goals. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams meet twice a week with grade level leaders who are responsible for facilitating discussions regarding instruction, student work, and probable revisions to the curricula. During team meetings student work is analyzed and a discussion of the conditions of learning and strategies implemented in the classroom are highlighted to inform the inquiry process. Further, all teams systemically use a protocol to record the minutes, topic of discussion, action taken, and outcome. Additionally, the protocol includes a list of items, an action plan, and results of discussions with dates for next steps. Completed protocols are sent to the leadership who meet with the teams monthly to discuss the progress, provide feedback, to further support teachers, resulting in school-wide instructional coherence. Moreover, teachers come fully prepared to team meetings, with data collected from lessons and exemplars used in literacy, math, and practices and strategies that have determined the conditions for learning. Such include the use of picture cues added to word walls, exemplar adjustments ensuring rigorous work for students to grapple with while meeting the expectation of, “show it and say it!” In addition, teachers engage students in, “feedback pairs” and a math, ‘Four Step Problem Solving Process’ which requires students to read, plan, solve, and justify their work. Finally, meetings conclude with a, “Teacher Reflection”, comprised of three open-ended questions: ‘What are some key pieces of information I plan to take away with me today? What am I going to try in my classroom before the next time we meet? And, “What strategies will I share with my grade?’ Thus, high levels of teacher discussions, and an instructional focus on groups of students and classroom practice result in progress toward mastery of student goals as evidenced in student portfolios.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase common assessments for all content areas so that teachers have relevant student data to make informed decisions when planning and to enable adequate tracking of student progress towards meeting instructional goals. (2.2)
 - Teachers use common assessments, such as running records to assess literacy, and in math teachers use Envision’s end-of-unit assessments. Moreover, teachers have created specific rubrics to assess a variety of genres and create academic tasks with embedded content information, and teachers meet regularly to examine how tasks meet instructional expectations, key standards, and unit expectations. Ongoing checks for understanding are used on a daily basis. For example, students use reflection logs to assess their learning and teachers use daily quick checks, exit slips, and questioning techniques via scaffolds in daily lessons to assess comprehension, resulting in instructional adjustments to meet student needs as they move through the units. In spite of these efforts, the school does not yet have common assessments other than those in English language arts and math, therefore limiting teachers in identifying interdisciplinary needs of students relative to meeting the instructional goal of increasing academic vocabulary.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Fresh Meadows 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