

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Lynn Gross Discovery**

**Elementary School Q175**

**64-35 102<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Queens  
NY 11374**

**Principal: Patricia Cooper**

**Dates of review: February 10 – 11, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Lynn Gross Discovery is an elementary school with 733 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 14% Hispanic, 67% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 9% 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 95.3%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Students benefit from a standards-based curriculum with resources that support student learning. (1.1)
  - The school aligns their curriculum in literacy and math using Carson-Dellosa's The Complete Common Core Standards Kit, an interactive tool that allows students to take charge of their own learning by seeing the Common Core teaching points posted in child-friendly language. They also use Mentoring Minds' Comprehensive Common Core Standards and Strategies Flip Chart to make sure that the standards of learning used in the ReadyGen English language arts program and GoMath! program are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teachers ensure that the curriculum is aligned to CCLS standards both in their lesson plans by using the CCLS flip chart, written in child-friendly language, which is visible in their classroom environment. By using those Common Core standards, which are designed to be relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge, and skills that students need for success in college and careers, the school promotes college readiness. To further support this, one of the teachers also facilitated a professional development day for the parents in college and career readiness. Teachers make decisions by meeting weekly in grade conferences and vertical meetings. All teachers on the grade have the same daily schedule that allows for ample time to support collaborative planning and preparation. Such approaches to curriculum development result in a focused attention to planning instruction that supports student mastery.
  - The English as a second language teacher and the special education teacher use the Mentoring Minds flipcharts and Webb's Depth of Knowledge Wheel to develop tasks aligned to the curriculum for use as Tier 1 interventions for small group instruction. These created tasks are based on the unit assessment results from the GoMath! program and the final tasks from the ReadyGen literacy program. The teachers look at the student work and unit assessment results and then create tasks based on those results that are tailored to students' needs. Teachers present different strategies to consistently provide individual support for all learners. They teach concepts like cause and effect using visual aids, tactile objects, videos and role-playing. Students have daily routines involving high-frequency flip charts, thinking maps, vocabulary cards, and picture clues as well as peer questioning and reflecting. These multifaceted strategies help develop higher order thinking skills to produce quality written work in both math and English language arts. The students have been taught steps to be performed before tasks are initiated in order to determine if they need to visualize, verbalize or write their thoughts while processing the steps to solve a problem. All of these multiple entry points assist in the learning process. To evaluate student achievement levels, teachers use the Depth of Knowledge levels. These opportunities ensure that all students are engaged, their needs are met and there is congruence in the delivery of instruction to students.

- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and appreciate the support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - Students remarked on how much they love the school. They all mention how comfortable they are in going to a staff member anytime during the day to help them with a problem or if they do not understand something in class. The social worker helps to support the social and emotional well being of students and families by working closely with the staff to strategize solutions to conflict resolution and crisis intervention, including parents and caregivers in providing resources for outside of school therapeutic services, medical assistance and food and financial assistance, and following up with the school attendance teacher, guidance counselor, and nurse to address the issues of attendance and children's medical accommodations. The social worker also serves as the liaison for the Child Abuse and Neglect Child Protection Service agency, Respect for All and No Place for Hate Programs. The guidance counselor also assists in students' transition to middle schools and works with parents to find outside resources including academic and afterschool services and related recreational activities. Staff members have created conditions that cultivate the expectations and the positive behaviors they want to see, which lead to increased school pride and greater interest in learning.
  - Strategic partnerships with a number of organizations enhance students' school experiences. One program, the CookShop program, sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture, introduces students in kindergarten to grade 2 to healthy foods. Students also gain specific vocabulary and learn how to read procedural texts on a variety of nutrition-related topics. The school also offers Cool Culture, a program for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten families to expose them to the many cultural institutions in New York City by giving them free admission, and Mighty Milers, sponsored by the New York City Road Runners, a running program designed to get students moving and prevent obesity and illness. Students set goals to run and/or walk a certain distance and earn rewards for reaching milestones along the way. Teachers attend professional development related to these partner programs to help support academic alignment to the CCLS. Students and parents shared that they appreciate this range of offerings that foster academic and personal development. These programs provide an environment that cultivates all students' strengths by nurturing their artistic, social and kinesthetic abilities, thereby supporting academic and socio-emotional growth.
- The principal is proactive in identifying additional grants and funding resources, which results in effective decision making and programming around teaching and learning. (1.3)
  - Despite the fact that the school does not receive Title 1 funding, the principal has provided a plethora of programs through other grants and by participating in pilot programs. For example, because last year's grade 3 state test results were poor, grade 4 students now use the Math Buddies technology program that provides individual online tutorials for students to access at home and for teachers to offer during small group instruction. First graders have Smarty Ants, an online program to practice word work

and vocabulary that supplements the school's work in phonics, phonemic awareness, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. The school is also piloting Capstone's Pebble Go reading program to allow student access to books online. In addition, the principal received a matching grant from the Education to Music program where the entire school receives music lessons that require the close reading of traditional informational texts as well as music notation. By using close reading strategies with musical notation, students must be able to decode multiple layers of meaning simultaneously, thereby reinforcing many skills students need to be successful in their academic classrooms. In addition, every grade receives an arts experience from an artist residency. Teachers and parents indicate that these resources are critical to the advancement of student and school improvement. The meticulous use of resources promotes accountability and enhances school-wide goal attainment.

- The principal has revised her Talented and Gifted (TAG) program so that higher-level students can still benefit from the enrichment program started by the Gifted and Talented teacher who retired in November. The principal hired an experienced fifth-grade teacher and adapted her schedule to accommodate one period of TAG teaching. To address the special education reform, the principal identified students in the self-contained classrooms whose data shows that they can benefit from inclusion in a general education class for literacy, math or both. Teachers meet weekly to track and discuss those students' progress. Students are also flexibly programmed in the arts. These strategic moves have already led to increased levels of student achievement based on iReady assessment results.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Use the observation tool to develop, along with teachers, goals and plans that reflect and support attainment of school-wide goals, professional growth and improved student achievement. (4.1)
  - Even though administration purchased the TeachBoost online program to use as their observation tool to systematically improve teaching practice and to accelerate teachers' professional growth using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, technology limitations have prevented them from using it. Although observations and walkthroughs are being done, teachers only receive verbal feedback and there is no written record of suggestions to improve their practice. In addition, there is no analysis of student work or data involved in the feedback, so it is unclear if or how this feedback helps to improve pedagogy. This lack of a clear focus to elevate rigor inhibits both professional growth and related student achievement.
  - In the beginning of the year, teachers were required to write a self-reflection on two to three areas they wanted to improve this year. Based on teachers' articulated goals, administration, along with network support, planned and executed relevant workshops on the Danielson Framework. However, these workshops were given to the whole staff and not differentiated according to individual needs. This results in a lack of targeted opportunities to design and offer instructions to teacher on how to elevate their own, and in turn, school-wide practices.

- Develop a cohesive system to ensure that all teachers know their individual students' needs, strengths, achievements and learning styles across the curriculum on an ongoing basis to support targeted instruction. (1.2)
  - The school ascribes to the philosophy that “all children have the capacity to learn” and has communicated that rigor involves designing coherent curricula that meet the differentiated needs of students. However, the practice of providing students with multiple opportunities to fully engage in learning activities is limited. Most classroom instruction observed provided one activity for all students regardless of their performance levels or learning styles. There are also inconsistencies regarding how teachers use the access points to scaffold instruction for students to ensure that they reach their intended learning targets. This limiting of student entry points into the curriculum leads to fewer opportunities for students to produce meaningful work products that demonstrate higher levels of thinking.
  - One of the principal's goals for this school year was for teachers to incorporate various Level 3 and 4 questions into lessons by utilizing the Depth of Knowledge wheel. However, in classrooms observed, teachers primarily asked students lower level recall questions. In addition, there was no clear evidence showing how scaffolding was created for English language learners and special education students, or how staff deepens the level of instruction to provide appropriate challenge, especially to facilitate higher order thinking. Thus, it is unclear if the current strategies are setting a path towards mastery of skill and content for all students.
- Provide consistent feedback to students with detailed resources of their success and clear next steps for improvement based on specific rubrics to help them set and achieve their goals. (2.2)
  - Current grading and reporting systems allow teachers, typically individually by teacher teams, to decide on criteria for numerical assessment of student work products. In addition, there is not a formalized classroom assessment system, such as conferencing and use of rubrics, consistently embedded in classroom practice to regularly assess student learning. This lack of coherence in assessment practices inhibits teacher teams and individual teachers from identifying more granular strengths and needs of student subgroups in order to differentiate instructional strategies and improve student outcomes.
  - The school developed a “Glows and Grows” student feedback template for teachers. This school-wide practice allows teachers to provide both positive feedback and next steps for student work. However, there is no room on these templates for student reflection. This prevents students from providing meaningful information to teachers on their own performance and their experience of instructional practice, which would allow for students to be more fully engaged in the learning process and for teachers to better meet student needs.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Lynn Gross Discovery	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>