



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Grand Central Parkway School**

**Elementary School Q196**

**71-25 113<sup>th</sup> Street  
Queens  
NY 11375**

**Principal: Susan Migliano**

**Dates of review: January 13-14, 2014**

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

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Grand Central Parkway is an elementary school with 689 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 14% Hispanic, 38% White, 5% Multi-Racial and 42% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is well developed.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The curriculum, carefully aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards, offers a wide range of rigorous, experiences that challenge all learners facilitating students' ownership of learning. (1.1)
  - When choosing instructional programs, the administration focuses on the strategic implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts. The administration, with input from teacher teams and the School Leadership Team, decided to implement the ReadyGEN curriculum for literacy instruction and GoMath! for math because they were available for students in all grades and are strongly aligned to the CCLS and instructional shifts. This results in curricular coherence throughout the school. Routine administrative observations reveal that teachers are implementing rigorous Common Core-aligned lessons, using proven strategies to elicit higher-order thinking including: close reading of complex texts, conducting in-depth research, and connecting to real-world problems. Teachers use the Mentoring Minds Common Core Standards and Strategies flip chart as a reference guide for their planning. Teachers plan during grade conferences and common planning periods. They use more visual aids, academic vocabulary and scaffold questions for the English language learners. In addition, the Mentoring Minds Depth of Knowledge wheel is used to plan for higher-order questioning, resulting in focused instruction that supports student mastery and puts them on a path toward college-level work.
  - All students are exposed to the same rigorous tasks, and teachers offer multiple entry points to support all students in being successful. For example, a grade 3 special education teacher adapted a text into "child-friendly" language so that her student could better answer comprehension questions. In a fifth grade, when a special education teacher, working alongside an English as a second language teacher, taught a lesson on the rainforest, they used a chart with illustrated academic vocabulary and thinking maps on the SMART Boards to help students organize their thoughts and push their thinking further. Through these efforts and scaffolds, students are able to engage with the material and demonstrate their understanding. The principal gave the Pre-Referral Intervention Manual book to every grade teacher team and they refer to the strategies in the book when planning. In addition, the English as a second language and special education teachers give classroom teachers the latest pedagogical strategies for engaging and advancing their students in all grades and across content areas, and they also participate in grade conferences, teacher team meetings and Inquiry Team meetings. For the higher-level students, teachers offer enrichment activities. These strategies ensure that all students are able to demonstrate their thinking.
- Well-defined, project-based units, which include multiple entry points, give all students the opportunity to undertake research, solve problems and be more active learners, leading to academic success. (1.2)

- Teachers share a common belief that all students can learn and adhere to Howard Gardner's *Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. Teachers routinely gather student data through conference notes, pre- and post-assessments, Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) assessments, running records, integrated tasks, unit tests, and checks for understanding, and they use this data to inform instruction. During teacher team meetings, teachers review student work and look for strategies for helping all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to progress academically. Faculty conferences, grade conferences, and even the school's Teacher Handbook also reflect an emphasis on adapting instruction to reach and advance all students. During visits to classrooms throughout the school, students were engaged in collaboration, rigorous work, small group work, and the use of thinking maps. All practices aligned with "effective" and "highly effective" teaching, as per the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers took on the role of facilitator during conversations and pushed student thinking by asking higher-order questions, thus modeling for students how to ask those types of questions to each other. For example, in a fourth grade classroom the teacher sat on the outside of a circle of students to facilitate a discussion about multiple texts. Students initiated conversations, with the teacher chiming in only to enhance the learning. A collective understanding of shared norms and values strongly supports the positive relations between adults and students, leading to an environment conducive to school-wide achievement.
- Teachers of all content areas have adjusted their practices to make sure that tasks are rigorous and deeper questions are asked. At a third grade curriculum/literacy meeting, teachers created a template for an end-of-unit task to determine whether or not it is Common Core-aligned, rigorous, and offered multiple entry points to students. In a fourth grade classroom, the teacher used thinking maps to help a small group of English language learners to record similarities and differences across three texts. An analysis of those graphic organizers showed that students were able to synthesize the information at a higher level. Teachers also use their interactive white boards to engage students through videos and other visual means. Teachers' lessons reflect careful thought regarding the individual needs of students, creating a consistent instructional focus school-wide. For example, when planning instruction, teachers write out the names of individual students who will need differentiated instruction for that particular lesson. Students can look at the chart to see which group to go to, which gives them more responsibility and accountability.
- Through regular analysis of data, leaders and faculty have an ongoing understanding of student performance that effectively informs instruction and organizational adjustments, leading to increased achievement. (2.2)
  - The school analyzes MoSL data, Schoolnet periodic assessments, Teachers College running records, Common Core-aligned tasks in literacy and math, and other formative and summative assessments across curricular areas at both grade and vertical team meetings in order to ensure cohesive scoring and to look for trends in data. For example, an analysis of MOSL data led teachers and administrators to see that students in grade 3 needed to strengthen organization in their writing, including structure and transitions. Teachers used this information to inform instruction, and subsequent writing samples revealed improved organization. In math, they found grade 3 students struggling with multi-step problems. In response,

teacher teams created action steps to provide effective feedback and instruction to students. The administration meets with teacher groups to review assessment results, and all data is discussed at Instructional Cabinet meetings. Teachers also meet with the administration four times per year to go over a Progress Monitoring form that includes individualized interventions teachers use to assure progress for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers and students also receive feedback from Study Island and Reading Eggs reports, which helps to target the skills for which students need intervention or enrichment. School-wide, students use data notebooks or folders to track their own progress in all key academic areas, and they meet with their teachers to discuss their self-reflections and academic goals. All of these systems help teachers become more effective in making instructional decisions, resulting in improved student performance, as evidenced in the student's Data Binder that contains all their grades and is tracked and graphed by the students.

- Teachers use student self-reflections for planning since they reveal whether or not students have moved from superficial to deep reflection. For example, in a grade 5 math class, a teacher noticed his students were not giving in-depth reflections. He then asked them to respond to a specific question that pushed their thinking, and this gave him deeper insight into his students' needs. Teachers use the information to create small groups for re-teaching or enrichment, and to adapt the curriculum to move more quickly through topics that students have mastered. The administration believes that teachers need to "teach the students in front of you," hence teachers must constantly check in with their students to assess their levels of understanding of the content. For example, a grade 5 teacher records notes from her conversations with students within a reading lesson and later uses these notes to plan for instruction and to track student progress. This effective use of assessment has led to the vast majority of grade 2 students increasing their reading levels between September 2013 and November 2013, lowering the number of students who were labeled as "below standards" by more than 31%. Further, data from the Response to Intervention team revealed that the positive impact of instruction at the Tier I level, including analysis and student reflections, led to a 5% reduction in students being referred for Tier II interventions from the previous school year.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teaching practices with a clear focus on improving instructional practices. (4.1)
  - Teachers started the year by reflecting on their practice using a Danielson self-evaluation sheet. During conversations with administration, teachers chose two year-long goals for themselves based on Danielson components. Administrators use this information to check-in with teachers throughout the year and to support them with targeted professional development. The administration's belief is that teachers learn best from other teachers and thus, as often as possible, lead teachers or others share their knowledge with colleagues. Administrators conduct six-week cycles of observations, focusing on moving teachers' practice, first observing untenured teachers and teachers who need the most improvement. They write all observations on TeachBoost and later sync them with Advance. After observations, teachers receive immediate verbal feedback, including next steps and a timetable for implementing changes. Administrators follow

up with teachers to make sure adjustments have been made and to see if they need additional support. For example, one new teacher's first observation was rated low for content knowledge and instruction. The administrator asked her mentor teacher and the math coach to help guide her in these areas. Subsequent classroom observations and student data showed that the teacher's practice had improved, as had her students' performance. Through a school-created progress monitoring form, Engrade, Schoolnet, Columbia Teachers College Assessment Pro and ARIS, administrators track which students are struggling and ask teachers to reflect on how they can adapt their instruction to positively impact these students. By strategically supporting and evaluating teachers, the school improved instruction, as evidenced by teacher progress noted in TeachBoost.

- The school has been using the Danielson Framework for Teaching for teacher feedback since 2011. Teachers started this year by watching videos of classroom instruction, and then worked as teams to come up with ratings. Whole group discussions ensued, resulting in teachers gaining a normed understanding of the Danielson Framework. During their initial planning conference, the administrators and individual teachers reviewed the self-reflection form and collaboratively chose two Danielson-related goals for each teacher. Administrators are careful during their frequent cycles of observations to give teachers immediate oral feedback on their lessons, including next steps, with a focus on their stated goals. Administrators also use all available resources to support teacher advancement, including a math coach, a literacy coach, a mentor teacher, teacher colleagues, network support, ARIS Learn modules, outside professional development and, of course, the instructional expertise of the administrators. For example, a new teacher who was observed at the beginning of the year was rated "developing" on content knowledge and pedagogy. Immediately after, the administrator spoke with the teacher, giving her specifics of how she could improve her practice. The administrator also had the teacher work with the literacy and math coaches, her mentor, the network's math liaison and colleagues. During subsequent observations, the administrator noted evidence of "effective" work in this component.
- Professional collaboration is a high priority and faculty profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the teaching community. (4.2)
  - Through a variety of teams, including literacy and math vertical teams, teacher team meetings and weekly professional development, teachers make modifications to ensure that curricular tasks are rigorous and aligned to the CCLS. All meetings include an agenda and minutes, which the administration reviews so that they can have follow up discussions with teachers. During instructional cabinet meetings, the administration and instructional leaders review the tasks that grades are using and give feedback. Weekly cabinet meetings, longitudinal studies of struggling students and classroom data analysis enable school leaders to evaluate teacher practice and student progress. Through these systems, administrators and teachers make strategic, data-driven decisions about how to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all students. For example, the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program is used throughout to boost

reading levels for the school's struggling readers. Since implementation of LLI in September, students have moved up one to two reading levels.

- Vertical teams meet regularly and include one teacher from each grade, as well as non-classroom teachers, such as a special education or cluster teacher. Grade level teams also meet on a regular basis. These teams focus on analyzing student work and assessments in order to inform instruction and advance teacher practice. For example, the Literacy Vertical Team compared a kindergarten student's results on the MoSL assessment to his writing from other tasks. They worked as a team to identify the instructional practices that helped the student advance and could be replicated in other classrooms. The administrators hold teachers accountable for implementing the changes agreed upon during team meetings by reviewing student data. Teachers also keep conference notes and data binders that they can bring to the administration as proof of improved instruction and student performance. The administration has access to student data on Teachers College Assessment Pro, Engrade and SchoolNet. The administrators see evidence of these practices and their impact during observations and in student writing where comprehension is improving.

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

- Strengthen the strong, and respectful communication in the school so that all stakeholders fully understand the support structures available for their personal and academic development. (1.4)
  - In their meetings, parents and students talked about how wonderful the school is and that staff members know all the students in the school. Parents expressed their appreciation for the principal's open door policy and how she listens to them. Students mentioned how the teachers always explain and give extra help when needed. Students and their parents are invited to International Night in May. In addition, prior to the start of the new school year, kindergarten orientation is held where parents get a tour of the building and teachers go over the curriculum and routines. However, as reported in the 2012-2013 School Survey, teachers felt that there is not a person or program that helps students resolve conflicts. Because of this, the principal is looking to start a student Peer Mediation program. Since this program is at the beginning stages, the impact of the program is not yet evident.
  - The school has a Book of the Month program where every other month teachers receive a book centered on a social-emotional theme, and teachers to plan some type of culminating academic activity around this theme. For example, for the book *When I Grow Up*, kindergarten students created a "Planting Seeds for the Future" bulletin board display where they wrote and drew what career they wanted when they became adults. However, parents have not been informed about this practice or the books. Also, the school has conducted several anti-bullying and internet safety workshops that gave parents a variety of resources for keeping their children safe online, and to help them look for signs of digital bad behavior, but these types of workshops only occurred three times this school year. This hinders the school's ability to fully support both the academic and personal growth of students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Grand Central Parkway	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>				<b>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
<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?			<b>X</b>				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?				<b>X</b>			
<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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>			
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?				<b>X</b>			
<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>