



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

School of Cyber Science & Literature

Elementary School Q212

**34-25 82nd Street
Queens
NY 11372**

Principal: Carin Ellis

Dates of review: January 14-15, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The School of Cyber Science and Literature is an elementary school with 802 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 72% Hispanic, 8% White, 18% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 93% English language learners and 12% 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 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school uses its resources effectively to build teacher capacity and improve instruction as evidenced by increased student engagement in academic tasks. (1.3)
 - School leaders fund and schedule five teachers to provide Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and Response to Intervention (RtI) services to address the learning deficits of target students in grades k-5. Academic intervention students are selected based on their Just Right levels and test scores in English language arts and math. For example, students include those who are level 2 for two or more consecutive marking periods or because they have dropped from grade level to an approaching or below grade level. Academic intervention services teachers use varied approaches and scaffolds to support small groups of students with specific skills in reading or math. Time is then provided for these staff members to meet with classroom teachers to share effective strategies that support students. Response to intervention students are chosen based on their inability to progress past a level 1 for more than two consecutive marking periods. After completing six week cycles, student progress is reviewed using unit tests, interim checks and the Wilson Assessment for Decoding and Encoding (WADE). As a result, 90% of students return to their classroom setting to receive support from their teachers with the specific strategies and resources used during their cycle of intervention, thereby ensuring that students experience continued success within the classroom.
 - The thoughtful principal makes deliberate organizational decisions to support the school's goals. For example, all teachers programs reflect two common preparation periods per week as well as dedicated time during inquiry periods to meet collaboratively. The dedicated teachers meet within and across grades during lunch and before the school day to discuss student work and plan ways to enhance their teaching practices. The literacy coach, math coach and data specialist attend team meetings and work collaboratively with teachers to analyze student work and plan accordingly. This then leads to teacher teams making evidence based adjustments to their lessons and teaching practices and participate in professional development activities in order to deepen their knowledge about successful instructional practices within the context of the curriculum. This especially supports the English language learners, special education students and low achieving students. As a result, administrative classroom observations indicate an increase in the rigor across grades and subjects. In addition, an analysis of writing portfolios and reading responses show that students express themselves more clearly in writing and discussions, and produce meaningful text-based writing pieces as reflected in increased performance level scores on performance-based work products in student folders and on bulletin boards.

- School leaders support high levels of pedagogy through effective evaluation of instruction aligned to the Danielson framework for teaching, resulting in strong teacher practice and improved student outcomes. (4.1)
 - Through frequent cycles of classroom visits and walkthroughs, administrators use the observation practices to collect low inference data, engage teachers in effective discussions, identify specific next steps, develop action plans, and plan professional development, thus providing actionable feedback to teachers that improve instructional practice. For example, new teachers meet with the administration, veteran staff members and support staff during summer months to become familiar with school policies, curriculum and planning prior to beginning the school year. Teachers new to the building are paired with a buddy teacher for support. All teachers are given written feedback in a timely manner. School leaders utilize the Danielson framework to evaluate teachers. The administration engages teachers in coding low inference notes and rating them objectively using the framework. Teachers state that this process is objective and transparent. Teachers are able to articulate what they are teaching and develop appropriate learning objectives for their students based upon the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The professional development plan is a living document that consistently changes based on the needs that school leaders and teachers identify. Teachers are exposed to the curricula of varied grades, work together to ensure vertical and horizontal curricula alignment. This type of collaboration is the cornerstone of professional development that includes the components that teachers identify as most important to their growth. Because teachers are given the autonomy to be creative in their practice, combined with clear expectations, they state that they are worthwhile and continuous valued members of the professional learning community. These combined efforts result in student growth as reflected in work products contained in students' portfolios. Additionally, teachers express that they are fully supported by the administration and have a full understanding of how changing their practice has a positive impact on student learning. Consequently, over 50% of teachers increased their ratings on domain 3, Instruction, of the Danielson framework as evidenced by the comparison of effective and highly "effective ratings from their first observations as compared to their subsequent observations.

- Professional collaborations are a high priority and teachers profit from varied opportunities to research effective instructional techniques that improve student progress. (4.2)
 - Every teacher is on a team that engages in core inquiry. Teams closely monitor students' progress and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching practices on student outcomes. The work aligns to the overall school goal to present curriculum that meets the needs of all students. Teams ensure that Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are embedded in each unit of study across grades and subjects, thereby strengthening instructional coherence across the school. For example, the fifth grade team rewrote the teaching plans for the book "The Spadefoot Toads." They revised the essential questions from those dealing with author's craft to those focusing on character development, traits, and changes over time. They also connected this main text to excerpts from two other

high level texts: Hatchet and Shells. Plans also include teaching students to cite text-based evidence when answering specific comprehension questions. The discussion and inquiry strategies are based on questioning techniques acquired at the Junior Great book workshops, such as, how does the character change and grow throughout the first three chapters of this novel? Children are also taught to present their ideas both verbally and in writing, and to use context clues to find the meaning of words in their high level texts. As a result, students successfully wrote persuasive essays as noted in increased overall level 3 scores on their essays as compared to overall level 2 scores on their initial on-demand writing samples.

- Several teachers participate in teacher leadership programs which are grounded in the Citywide Instructional Expectations. In addition, some teachers are enrolled in administrative leadership programs such as, Teacher Leadership Program (TLP). Consequently, these teachers participate in various capacity-building opportunities including learning through professional texts, looking at teacher and student work and contributing to decisions pertaining to CCLS performance tasks. Because teachers are encouraged to work together and rely on each other's ideas and expertise, capacity is continuously built each and every day. As a result, teachers state that they are invested in their work and enjoy their leadership roles which contribute to student learning across the school as noted in the units of study and common assessments they design. Consequently, student performance trends and academic progress show improvement as noted in the positive results of post-assessment CCLS performance tasks. Sixty-three percent of students that scored a 1 or 2 moved up a performance level from their on demand writing piece and published writing piece after individualized differentiated writing instruction.
- School leaders and teachers effectively align curricula to the CCLS and offer engaging learning experiences that challenge students and support their learning. (1.1)
 - School leaders review the Citywide Instructional Expectations and conduct an analysis of student performance data including running records, Go Math chapter tests, on demand writing tasks and the New York State English as a second language assessment test (NYSELSAT) to support their work on the alignment to the curriculum to CCLS. As a result, the kindergarten team is working on an English language arts unit to ensure that students are prepared to write informational texts. Students are taught to differentiate between reality and fantasy, glean facts from text and identify features of non-fiction texts. In addition, students engage in more non-fiction read alouds, learn about insects in depth, thereby expanding their knowledge of the science curriculum. The team adapted the curriculum to meet specific needs by providing additional resources to support students when writing their informational text responses. For instance, teachers used numerous entry points such as visual posters and the Promethean Board for the special education students and the English as second language (ESL) students. Students were assessed on their knowledge of letters, sounds, ability to identify and write words and sentences when they arrived at school in September. Over 60% of students were able to identify letters and sounds. However, only 15% were able to identify and or write words and

sentences. In October, students took the New York City Performance baseline assessment. Over 80% of students were able to write letters that correspond accurately to sounds. Twenty five percent of students were able to write words phonetically. Only 10% of students were able to write using proper sentences and accurate spelling and punctuation. However, as of January, 2014, over 75% were able to accurately explain, in writing, that which they had read or heard.

- This year was the first year that students in grades 3 to 5 were introduced to the Go Math program. Initial assessments identified that children did not have the background vocabulary and concepts to navigate the program successfully. Many children were unable to do their homework, and parents were unable to assist them. Students were able to compute, but had difficulty with problem solving. Teachers worked in grade-level teams to modify the pacing of lessons and the order of units of study and to design meaningful academic learning experiences to cognitively engage all students. For example, teachers provide students with an overview of the different ways to perform an operation and then create small data-based focused groups for students who do not master a particular skill. Students who show mastery do not spend an excessive amount of time on mastered skills, therefore, allowing them to move on. Teachers of special education students reteach sections of the program and use Tier 2 strategies to support student learning. For example, Tier 2 breaks up the concepts being taught into more manageable pieces. More time is spent on reading problems and time is spent on key words and phrases in a word problem. As a result, the baseline unit data increased to the mid chapter review 23% in grade 3, 19% in grade 4, and 18% in grade 5. Scores on the unit tests have increased in grade 3 to 15%, grade 4 to 12% and grade 5 to 11%. Although students were not tested on their ability to explain their answers on the mid-chapter checks, students were still able to make gains when asked to defend their answers on the unit tests.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to reflect effective feedback to students in order to make instructional adjustments and provide clear next steps to improve learning outcomes. (2.2)
 - The school has effective practices in collecting and analyzing data from student assessments to understand the strengths and areas of improvement for the school, classes, individual and groups of students. However, not all student work includes feedback in the form of next steps for improvement. As a result, teachers are not fully able to evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum or instructional decisions or to provide all students with targeted next learning steps. Teacher teams and individual teachers use running records, and curricular aligned end of unit assessments to supplement summative data and identify student performance levels. However, the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment within instructional periods to make immediate adjustments to lessons is not yet a fully embedded practice across the school. This limits teachers' ability to pinpoint and address the special needs of some student subgroups and modify targeted class-based interventions to accelerate learning. Consequently, instructional strategies and learning tasks are not always strategically

revised, hindering opportunities to meet the needs of all students.
(2.2a,c)

- Refine teaching practices to ensure the vast majority of teachers strategically provide multiple entry points so that lessons challenge all students and result in the production of meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - Teachers use scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into instruction in their lesson planning in response to student's needs and interests, including special education students. The use of word walls across classrooms helps all students build their vocabulary. Also, the school focuses on supporting English language learners (ELLs) by hiring dually certified teachers who have both Common Branch and English as a second language (ESL) licenses. However, lessons do not always challenge all students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, in that assignments do not include opportunities for them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills or extend their learning, thus limiting even greater participation and learning outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: School of Cyber Science & Literature	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