



**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**

**Police Officer Ramon Suarez School**

**Q239**

**17-15 Weirfield Street  
Ridgewood  
NY 11385**

**Principal: Robin Connolly**

**Dates of review: January 7- 8, 2014**

**Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

P.S. 239 is an elementary school with 755 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 75% Hispanic, 9% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 17% 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 93.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal makes effective decisions to align resources with the goals of the school in order to provide students with optimal learning experiences. (1.3)
  - Academic and socio-emotional student needs are prioritized through reading interventions that help the lowest third students become proficient. To this end the school has set up monthly Response to Intervention (RTI) meetings to discuss student progress in Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) and Reading Recovery (RR), as well as monthly School Implementation Team meetings to discuss students in need of extra academic/emotional support to provide at-risk Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS) in grades two-four. Results of this program have been successful as evidenced by 94% of students (15 out of 16) were promoted to second grade in 2012-2013. Furthermore, more than half (60%) of these students completed first grade reading on or close to grade level, making a two-year reading gain in one year. In 2012-2013, 50% of students (8 out of 16) serviced through Reading Recovery were English language learners and improved their proficiency levels by 75%, with six of eight students moving one or two levels on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT).
  - School goals are transparent and well known by the staff, students and parents in addition to supporting the tenets of professional development to increase teacher effectiveness. Data review indicated that there was a need to assist students with problem solving. Through teacher team work and weekly coach support, problem solving tasks are included in lessons throughout the school, as evidenced by students talking and writing about their solutions to multi-step problems. In addition, a vertically aligned curriculum team is focusing on the school's Writing about Reading (WAR) goal and using a grade specific Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) rubric to analyze students' progress. As a result of the work of these two teams, reading and writing in grades two through five are secured with anchor texts, questioning techniques, and discussion strategies. Teachers posit that because of the strength of the curriculum units, more students are able to have rich text based discussions and provide evidence- based claims. Consequently, lower school students are showing improvements in Fountas and Pinnell running records and 25% improved in their reading levels from Unit 1A to Unit 1B.
- The school promotes a safe environment that supports collaborative relationships, good attendance, and appropriate behavior which enables students to focus on scholarship. (1.4)
  - The philosophy of the school is that it takes a village to raise a child and the staff is on board with the emotional dedication needed to convey this message so that students feel supported. The school has initiated a Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS). The staff and students decided on three behavioral traits, namely responsibility, respect and determination, which are modeled on a daily basis and measured using a

PBIS matrix. As an incentive, students receive “Connolly Cash” and are able to save-up for fun events and hobbies led by staff. Successful practices of this incentive show that there is an increase in positive relationships between staff and students, as evidenced by the varied communication strategies that have been adopted by all participants for different types of situations. Moreover, data indicates that behavior in the lunchroom has improved and students agree that they are motivated to be reflective about their actions and help others in need of assistance. Furthermore, the student government and student-run safety patrol develop character building standards and are role models for their peers who look up to them for advice, support and a link to making school decisions.

- Students agree that when they are at school they feel surrounded by staff who resemble “parental substitutes” and who have their best interest at the forefront of all decisions because they know them so well. The school’s guidance counselor provides counseling supports to students and families on an as-needed basis. Students have opportunities to be involved in activities like community service during lunch, assisting teachers with classroom routines, and peer tutoring. In addition, there are assemblies which highlight a Respect for All program and students create videos on bullying and being respectful to others. Parents agree that the support of the guidance counselor and the parent coordinator is priceless and that the school always knows how to help families who have concerns. In tracking the family outreach activities school data shows that more parents are involved in school activities, student attendance has increased, there are fewer suspensions, and there is an overall change in students’ attitudes about school.
- School leaders and teachers use diverse assessments that are aligned to the curriculum to guide instructional decisions and inform planning in order to establish a clear understanding of the performance of students. (2.2)
  - Teachers use various assessments to generate feedback that informs the progress of the school’s instructional goals. Teachers review and analyze running records, mid-year formative assessments in literacy, pre- and post-writing tasks, teacher-designed writing assessments and Envision math pre- and post-module tests to determine skills and priorities based on the CCLS. As a result of this collaborative team analysis, teachers identified two priorities across content areas and grade levels including creating arguments that can be supported through the use of text based evidence, and reasoning and thinking critically through problem solving in mathematics. Thus, the school has created rubrics, assessments and grading policies that reflect the infusion of these strategies so that students are more prepared to successfully complete challenging tasks. Evidence has shown that this system of assessment review has yielded positive results; in grade two mathematics there was only a 4.66% gap between English language learners and English proficient students, and all students showed improvement in adding fluency of numbers up to twenty, subtracting using a number line, and showing addition and subtraction facts that match a picture.
  - Teachers make varying degrees of adjustments and revisions to their units and lessons during planning meetings and individual planning sessions according to the analysis teacher created reading and writing

assessments that measure cycles of growth. These changes are evident in their grade level planning templates which include students' strengths, needs, goals and strategies that need to be taught. In writing and mathematics, teachers are implementing questioning strategies to foster critical thinking during lessons in order to determine students' understanding of number fluency and accuracy and the ability to explain word problems using a multi-step approach. Results indicate that in grade three 62% of the grade did not regress in reading or writing levels over the summer and students are showing progress in reading word problems and identifying the correct operation using reasonable estimation practices.

- School leaders use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
  - School leaders offer purposeful feedback in supporting teacher development and use a comprehensive framework for tenure and performance evaluations. Probationary staff members work with peer leaders on a tenure plan that aligns to their professional goals as captured by the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) professional development survey. Through observation and analysis of student work and data, school leaders work with teachers to improve pedagogy. Novice teachers work with the coach and receive mentoring towards their professional development plan. A review of current data indicates that more than 50% of the staff is improving in questioning and discussion strategies as a result of the purposeful collaboration that takes place on a weekly basis.
  - Teachers agree that expectations for teacher practices are clearly communicated by school leaders and supported through professional development. The school conducts short cycles of observations to support teachers and provides them with feedback focused primarily on designing coherent instruction, using questioning to help students with critical thinking, and creating purposeful assessments in instruction. The use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching helps to leverage needed supports and provide teachers with resources and professional development sessions to increase instructional strengths and individual personal goals. Results show that work in creating different lesson structures to promote more rigorous evidence-based discussions around text, and embedding the close reading of complex texts within the reading and writing units of study have improved students' progress. In grades four and five, 45% of students are reading and writing at or above grade level and students with disabilities have shown gains of one to four reading levels since September of this year.

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

- Increase the rigor of tasks and questioning across classrooms to engage students in higher order thinking to improve all students' academic achievement. (1.1)
  - School leaders and staff embrace the support from network members and consultants who help them make alterations to the curricula to integrate

the CCLS and instructional shifts into the English language arts (ELA) and math units of study. This is a work in progress as teacher teams continue to make further adjustments regarding the balance of developing and revising literacy units of study, reviewing anchor texts, creating text-based questions to increase rigor, as well as the integration of close reading into each literacy unit to build sustainability and comprehension. Although curriculum alignment is ongoing there are still limitations as to how the work will promote college and career readiness for all students.

- The school's units of study in grades two through five reflect the ongoing work of teacher teams and the curriculum team in designing and revising units of study aligned to the CCLS. Most lessons incorporate essential questions, and strategies are embedded within grade-specific units and performance tasks. However, in some classrooms student work was completed quickly and lacked challenge for students. Students who are above grade level state that most of the work is enjoyable, but easy for them to complete. Therefore, academic tasks and lessons that incorporate rigorous habits to engage all students in developing their cognitive thinking skills are inconsistent across grades and subjects. This hinders some students' achievement as noted in the results of the most recent ELA and math state tests.
- Enhance instruction so that lessons strategically provide multiple entry points across classrooms to provide a sense of curiosity, engagement and challenge for students of all subgroups. (1.2)
  - The school believes that students learn best through quality instruction where standards based strategies are modeled for students and applied to learning with guided and peer support; the ultimate goal being application to real life. Teachers are encouraged to provide higher-order questions during lessons that are open-ended, challenge students to think, and require students to support their thinking with evidence from text. Although these are school wide practices, they are not taking place in all classrooms, thus creating different levels of application and student results.
  - Across grades teachers use a variety of instructional supports and strategies, such as offering questions of leveled complexity and sentence prompts to activate thinking. Small group instruction, modeling tasks expectations, and peer support are also offered in upper grade classrooms. Student work products in grades four and five reflect improvement in writing. Results indicate that approximately 30% of students have improved in reading and comprehending informational text since September. Additionally, according to the fourth grade English as a second language writing analysis, 26% of students made gains between the pre- and post-summative task assessment. However, when lesson extensions were assigned they consisted of additional work for higher performing students. Furthermore, the scaffolds offered to students with varying degrees of lesson readiness were not strategically provided to reflect higher order thinking skills in students' work products. As a result, students agree that they are learning new ways to meet their goals, but some are unsure as to why they are grouped for different activities and how the specific tasks that have been offered extend their thinking process.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Police Officer Ramon Suarez School	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>