



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

PS/IS 268

Elementary-Middle School 268

**92-07 175th Street
Queens
NY 11433**

Principal: Lissa Grant Stewart

Dates of review: April 7 – 8, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS/IS 268 is an elementary-middle school with 609 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 46% Black, 22% Hispanic, 2% White, and 30% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 15% 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 95.2%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes informed and effective programming decisions that use resources to best support the school-wide goals and address the learning needs of all students, resulting in improved outcomes. (1.3)
 - The school has an upgraded computer lab and a functional library. Smart boards are available in the majority of classrooms and classroom libraries and consistently upgraded with leveled books. The school uses ReadyGEN and Code X for literacy as well as GoMath! and Connected Mathematics Project 3 for math. The school uses manipulatives in math and Elmo's and projectors in the majority of classrooms. One of the school's instructional goals is building academic vocabulary and using the materials for that purpose. As a result, students receive the curricular support they need to produce quality work products as evidenced in a fifth grade English language arts class.
 - The administration intentionally set up common prep times and lunch times by grade to supplement inquiry and grade team meetings. Teachers meet informally to connect with each other. The school's instructional cabinet sends teachers to network trainings regularly and teachers then turn key information to their peers. Teachers acknowledge their role as professional developers while taking responsibility for their own learning. The grade 5 teacher team spoke about how they worked with the newer, less experienced members of the team to build their skills and confidence. Teachers also provide workshops to parents throughout the year. Teachers refine the pacing calendars on the new materials and work to make them more accessible to English language learners and special education students. Teachers revise tasks and work together to enhance pedagogy that increasingly focuses on student engagement with progressively more time for demonstration of critical thinking within lessons. Consequently, students are expected to explain their thinking, using text base evidence to support their inferences.
- The school has effectively aligned assessment strategies and rubrics to accurately gauge student progress so that adjustments can be made at the school level to support continued student achievement. (2.2)
 - The teachers use a range of assessments to evaluate student performance. In addition to benchmark assessments, they use unit assessments and rubrics that are tweaked to meet the school's needs. The rubrics are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and are used to guide their writing and self-assessment of skills. Student work products are continuously brought to weekly teacher team meetings and normed against the rubrics. The work is also utilized to share best practices and inform unit planning. As a result, teachers know where the students stand and are able to provide detailed feedback that supports students in taking their next steps.
 - Across the school, teachers track student progress with a range of classroom level periodic assessment data that supplements summative

tests and tasks. Teachers use their own assessments also, such as writing-on-demand assessments, quizzes, running records, assignments and reflection journals. Progress is monitored within specific skills and across a range of formats including academic vocabulary, reading levels, rate and accuracy, and math performance. Teachers examine trends across subgroups including English language learners and special education students by examining student work. This information informs instruction and small group formation. As a result of utilizing this information, the school has shown improvement in student progress in math and literacy from the previous year as evidenced in baseline assessments.

- The school refines and aligns the curriculum to CCLS to purposefully target the needs of all students with engaging tasks so that children are cognitively challenged. (1.1)

The teachers work in grade level teams to plan together to modify the curriculum across all areas of subject matter including social studies, science, technology and the arts, using literacy and numeracy as the foundation to align the purchased materials to the CCLS. During these teacher team meetings, teachers review student work, including samples from English language learners and special education students, to revise tasks to upgrade them using Webb's Depth of Knowledge chart. One example of this effort to close the gap with English language learners and students with disabilities is the work of the English as a second language teachers and special education teachers to emphasize oral language and explicit teaching of vocabulary. Another example is the fifth grade teachers demonstrating a clear understanding of the work required for mastery of the fourth grade so that deficits in understanding are worked on early in the school year. With regard to increases in rigor, curricular tasks such as performance-based math tasks on measurement were evident across classrooms in exercises on whole number place value, patterns and graphs and expressions with equations that challenge students including English language learners and students with disabilities. As a result, student work demonstrates evidence of extended thinking and mastery of content like the sixth grade students who drew polygons with given vertices on a coordinate grid and compared areas and perimeters.

What the school needs to improve

- Clarify and refine the school's set of beliefs about how students learn best so that appropriate levels of challenge are reflected in all classrooms. (1.2)
 - Flexible student groups are evident in English language learner and special needs classrooms. The benchmark assessments and embedded unit tests provide information that assists in student grouping. Teachers plan together during team meetings and higher order thinking is reflected on the questioning that is based on Level 3 and above on Webb's Depth of Knowledge matrix. Teachers activate students' prior knowledge and make connections to increase their learning. For example, in a grade 5 social studies class, the teachers put text about the Mayan civilization up on a Smart Board so the class could refer to it repeatedly in answering

their questions. Academic vocabulary is emphasized in most classrooms. Students are eager to share out their knowledge when given the opportunity to do so. The Danielson Framework, particularly Domain Three on questioning and discussion, is referred to by both leadership and faculty. However, there is little evidence across classrooms that teachers share ideas on using multiple entry points into the curricula. Also, instructional practices that facilitate and elicit critical thinking skills are unevenly distributed across the school. As a result, student performance is related to the skill of the teacher in their individual classroom, leading to sporadic progress among English language learners and special education students across the building.

- Improve the culture of mutual trust and positive rapport across the school to increase students' social-emotional and academic growth. (1.4)
 - The majority of students report feeling safe at school. The interactions between students and adults are based on caring and a commitment to the social-emotional well-being of the children. The principal has stated that she has an open door policy for both students and adults. Students speak freely about their learning experiences in and out of class. They work diligently to get their work done and are comfortable asking teachers for help when they need it. The guidance counselor handled mostly academic matters and mandated services to targeted students as well as handle at-risk students on an as-needed basis. However, the major concerns in the School Survey about the school culture and climate, particularly those expressed by teachers, are beginning to be addressed. Trust is being built by open forums and discussions between adults at the school and teachers feel that their concerns are beginning to be handled collaboratively. As this is a new program, the data is not yet available to show impact. Although students feel comfortable asking a teacher questions, they do not believe that adults outside their classroom teacher know them well in the building. As a result, the school is developing structures in support of academic and personal growth of students and adults.
- Enhance processes to purposefully evaluate and adjust curricular, instructional and organizational practices to meet the learning needs of students and the expectations of the CCLS. (5.1)
 - The weekly teacher team inquiry schedule provides teachers with the chance to share best practices as they analyze student work and data. Teacher leaders meet regularly with the leadership and engage in reflective and meaningful conversations regarding the effectiveness of their team's work. The principal encourages staff to take on leadership roles and serve in various capacities on teacher teams. Teachers have a voice in the selection of instructional resources, such as the new CCLS-aligned curriculum materials. The leaders have a process to evaluate curricular, instructional and assessment practices and they keep their data in binders and also electronically. However, adjustments and modifications of any kind are typically quite small and the pacing of these adjustments is fairly slow. As a result, the school is moving more slowly than it is capable in meeting the expectations of the CCLS in response to student learning needs.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

| School name: PS/IS 268 | 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 |