



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Public School 295

Elementary – Middle School Q295

**222-14 Jamaica Avenue
Queens
NY 11428**

Principal: Deon LaVigne-Jones

Dates of review: March 24 – 25, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Lenon C. Murray

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 295 is an elementary/middle school with 571 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 31% Black, 26% Hispanic, 6% White, and 35% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 11% 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 96.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leader and teachers effectively ensure rigorous and coherent curricula and offer engaging learning experiences that challenge students and support their learning. (1.1)
 - The school leaders have selected materials that they believe are most closely aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). These include Expeditionary Learning, ReadyGen, GoMath!, Math Connects and iReady. The leaders extend high quality material to science, social studies and the arts. For example, the visual arts teacher uses suggestions from internet-based educational supports and the social studies teachers often use document-based questions to stimulate student thinking. They use curricular maps and pacing calendars that they develop on teacher teams to tailor the abundance of content to the needs of their students. The school further develops literacy skills by using the interdisciplinary approach to coach college-ready attitudes. These skills extend literacy across all content areas. Attitudes for college include persistence, creativity and critical thinking. They demand that students greatly increase their reading in the content areas by developing mandatory assignments that focus on reading and their ability to inform and explain their own ideas about the content. This has resulted in improved coherence in their entire curriculum.
 - Across the school, evidence of prolific writing reflects rigorous habits and critical thinking for the vast majority of learners. This school community has made diligent efforts to integrate the visual and performing arts for all learners including English language learners and special education students. This integration is based on wide student participation in the arts and careful lesson planning by the teachers. Student paintings and drawings adorn the classrooms and hallways and during the art festival each student in the school produces artwork. Graded writing is available across all student subgroups and the rubrics indicate consistent improvement in the level of work. As a result, higher order thinking and rigorous habits are evident with all subgroups, as evidenced by active participation across classrooms.
- Teaching practices and lessons across classrooms are consistently scaffolded so that students have multiple opportunities to meet their learning needs, resulting in improved learning outcomes. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers use the workshop model of instruction aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, Teachers plan lessons together on teacher teams and have clear objectives at the beginning of each lesson. The mini-lesson is followed by demonstration and modeling on the part of the teacher. The students are required to be actively engaged before being deployed to independent and group work. For example, in a grade 7 social studies class, after the brief mini-lesson students were required to listen to and analyze a song that is typical of a certain period. They listened to the words and the sentiments before discussing and creating their own songs and poems. Thus, they became artists and social commentators in the era described by the teacher. As a

result, students used their higher order thinking and questioning skills to increase their learning.

- Teachers across classrooms and grades use data and their knowledge of students' strengths, needs and interests to group students, including English language learners and special education students, for learning. Classroom teachers analyze the data generated from benchmark assessments, unit assessments and teacher-made tests in core subjects regularly so that activities and flexible groups are adjusted based on learning outcomes. Lessons engage students across grades in above level, on level and struggling students that provide adequate entry points and supports to improve their learning. For example, in an art class some students use watercolors, others used crayons and still others wrote an essay on their portrait. The art teacher required students to explain the inspiration for their theme, the artist that inspired them and what message they were conveying to their audience. As a result, students demonstrate improvement in critical thinking in their work products.
- The school effectively uses a wide range of assessments that guides student grouping and informs planning, resulting in a clear understanding of the performance of learners. (2.2)
 - The school designs rubrics that are used to provide a standard towards which students can work. Each grade modifies the rubric to reflect grade level proficiency. The grading policies are informed by writing-on-demand, quizzes, journal reflections, a problem of the day and even exit slips. The leadership and faculty examine their assessments to determine levels of rigor and ensure that they are effectively aligning assessments to the CCLS in literacy and math. Assessment data provides clear evidence of the achievement of individuals and subgroups. For example, a fifth grade special education teacher's analysis of the pre-unit data revealed that students struggle with long division and remainders. The teacher adjusted her practice to immerse students in regrouping and moving the remainder, resulting in increased skill in numeracy. Teachers' effectiveness in tracking student progress based on recent and relevant data has supported leaders and faculty in understanding student performance. This has led to accurate feedback to students and teachers on student achievement that includes error patterns and gaps in understanding.
 - Teachers give consideration to whether students are achieving the objectives of each lesson as they use new materials in the implementation of the CCLS. Across classrooms, teachers are using various checks for understanding, such as different levels of questioning according to Webb's Depth of Knowledge chart, one-on-one conferring, think/pair/share and reflection journals. An eighth grade student wrote in her reflection that she wanted to improve the voice in her writing. Her teacher was subsequently able to coach her into imagining herself in her character's shoes. This has increased teachers' ability to make timely adjustments, such as directing students to texts, websites and coaching resources both during and after the school day that better meet student learning needs.

- The school has refined its system for providing actionable feedback to teachers based on the Danielson Framework, and it has resulted in improved instructional practice. (4.1)
 - The administration has conducted dozens of observations this school year in accord with teacher preferences. The vast majority of the observations are informal, taking fifteen minutes or fewer and focusing on specific areas of teaching practice. Administrators give specific feedback to teachers in writing in a graded report including probationary teachers who are still honing their craft. Some of these teachers are in areas as diverse as the arts or physical education and student work and data are a significant part of the evaluations. Teachers work to keep students engaged at all times and coach them in collaboration with their peers regardless of the assignment. The school leaders emphasize rigor and working with specific outcomes in mind. This supervisory approach has resulted in the steady development of teachers as evidenced in their sequential observation reports.
 - The school has fully immersed the faculty in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders have worked diligently on designing coherent instruction, discussion and questioning, engaging students in learning and establishing a culture for learning. In the initial planning conferences between individual teachers and administration, teachers volunteered their goals clarified their expectations for feedback. The administrators in turn identified point personnel, coaches, lead facilitators and network resources in expanding the range of teacher support. For example, in the upper grades, some teachers had deep content knowledge and received feedback in a written evaluative report with a grade in relevant areas on releasing responsibility to the students rather than just imparting information. Other teachers were working on streamlining their management of flexible groups. As a result, teachers make individual changes in their practice and take responsibility for their professional growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the capacity for organizational decision-making that provides multiple opportunities for students to engage in challenging academic experiences. (1.3)
 - The principal provides monthly professional development through the network on the Danielson Framework and its implications for teacher practice. She arranges learning sessions weekly for both groups and individual staff persons. She accepts faculty input on the distribution of school resources. She has designed teacher schedules to facilitate teacher team meetings during the school day. The administration created additional time for teachers to meet and extended time for students including afterschool and Saturday programs. The computer lab is available for students to utilize and a fully-equipped teacher center is convenient for staff use. Teachers have approved a School Based Option vote for one fifty minute block dedicated to professional development and another block dedicated to a Danielson focus. However, the extended learning opportunities have been primarily carved out to

address the needs of struggling and borderline students approaching the standards. High performing students have few opportunities outside of the arts for creativity and individual expression. This has resulted in numerous opportunities for remediation but many missed opportunities for acceleration.

- Expand systems to evaluate and adjust curricular, cultural and instructional practices in order to support continuous student learning and to meet CCLS expectations. (5.1)
 - The school uses cabinet and instructional planning meetings to assess the quality of teacher teamwork and current instructional practices. Teacher team work is intended to support transition to the CCLS. Teacher leaders and team facilitators support their colleagues daily through their regularly scheduled meetings. At these meetings they engage in collaborative lesson planning and share effective instructional strategies. The school leaders conduct routine monitoring to ensure that the teams are on course to attain their objectives, particularly in the area of CCLS implementation and instructional practices. The leaders use cabinet meetings to evaluate their findings. These important findings, however, are not disseminated to the wider school community so that teacher teams are often unaware of the effective work being done by their colleagues in other grades. For example, eighth grade English language arts teachers are doing strong work with student writing with both quality and quantity but few other teachers were aware of this work. As a result, the ability of leadership to adjust the use of organizational resources is hindered.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: PS/IS 295	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