



**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

Public School 354

Elementary School Q354

**1216-10 Bedell Street
Jamaica, NY 11434**

Principal: Jermaine Green

**Dates of review: December 17-18, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 354 is an Elementary school with 355 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 4. The school population comprises 90% Black, 6% Hispanic, 0% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curriculum offers a wide range of rigorous, challenging experiences and choice to facilitate students' ownership of learning. (1.1)
 - The school aligns their curriculum in literacy and math using Carson-Dellosa's, "*The Complete Common Core Standards Kit*", which contains the standards, as well as student friendly versions of them; and Mentoring Minds', "*Comprehensive Common Core Standards and Strategies Flip Chart*". Teacher teams go lesson by lesson and use these two resources to analyze what standards are being used. Questioning is prioritized in planning to get students to use more effective dialogue, which ties in with the instructional focus of collaborative learning, and student-to-student discussion, which was a concern on the previous state test results. The school believes that this is important for college and career readiness because students need to develop the habits and skills of readers and writers in informational argument and narrative writing. This practice in English language arts (ELA), as well as in math, is vertically aligned and units are aligned to CCLS. As a result, the progression towards college and career readiness is built in. Such approaches to curricula development result in a focused attention to planning instruction that supports student mastery.
 - Teacher teams use the Hess Rigor Matrix Rubrics and text-based questions to analyze and create rigorous tasks for all four content area subjects. Teachers decided to use this combination after a summer analysis of their tasks and realizing that those tasks were in Level 2. In classes observed, students engaged in problem solving activities, worked with models with mathematics, and constructed viable arguments in order to evidence their understanding in math. Student work products are authentic and demonstrate student thinking. For example, in a fourth grade math lesson, after students solved a problem, they had to discuss as a group if they could do the task over, how would they do it differently. Scaffolds are in place to support the vast majority of English language learner (ELL) students and special education students. For example, the Special Education Team developed a Scaffold Key Ring where laminated cards, which include a checklist, an anchor chart and a sundry list of strategies for the particular skill being taught, are attached to a key ring and given to a student so they can work it out themselves during the mini lesson. These coherent practices ensure that curricula across subject areas are infused with rigorous tasks informed by Common Core Learning Standards.
- The school-wide development of well-differentiated project-based learning is giving students the opportunity to undertake research, solve problems and be more active learners. (1.2)
 - Various structures are in place so that all teachers have the same understanding of effective instruction. The school's instructional cabinet consists of teachers, each with expertise in a particular area. During

cabinet meetings, teachers discuss and create ways in which students can learn best through a focus on practices that increase student engagement by building student independence and accountability for their own learning. This shared norms and values, aligned to the Danielson Framework, are evident in the school-wide use of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. In a grade 4 Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) math class, after the mini lesson, the students were in three groups; one group was not ready to engage the task independently worked with the special education teacher doing a reteach lesson, another group was working on an independent task that was displayed on a task card and another group was with the general education reviewing elements of the mini-lesson on the Smartboard before being directed to work independently. Such coherent practices across the vast majority of classrooms strongly support a unifying belief system that is conducive to school-wide achievement.

- To enhance the school's goal of "25% of the English language learner (ELL) students in grade K-4 to increase their academic proficiency on performance-based tasks," teachers incorporate various strategies such as frontloading vocabulary, picture supports, prompts and differentiated activities. English as a second language (ESL) teachers encourage the same level of expectations for all students, including ELL's. Strategies provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and scaffolds into the curricula so that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, which was evident in classes observed. For example, in a fourth grade class math class, students were involved in Tiered Tasks. The Intervention Group was with the teacher solving long division problems while the On-Level and Advanced groups were solving division problems collaboratively which were placed on a task card. These strategies allow for well-matched group assignments resulting in students receiving multiple entry point instruction and supports to reinforce the concepts taught.
- Administrators and teachers effectively use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs, student progress, plan instruction and create successful intervention strategies when needed. (2.2)
 - All of the assessments given at the school are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. In mathematics, there are four assessments for each unit; placement, pre-unit, mid-unit and end of unit tests. The pre-unit assesses the particular skill for student grouping. The mid-unit review is used to see where students are and which ones need intervention. Afterwards, there is an end-of-unit test. In literacy, every ten days there is a change of skill. Students are given a placement test that determines the initial grouping. Students are grouped as either: Apprentice, Approaching, English language learner, On or Above. Students are given weekly examinations at the end of each skill. School staff carefully analyzes all assessment results. Groups of students who require intervention work with staff during afterschool and Saturday tutorials. For example, in literacy, students' reading levels are tracked through the use of the Teacher's College Running Records assessment. They are conducted five times a year. The assessment not only evaluates each student's reading level but also provides teachers with invaluable information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each student. As a result of such practices, teachers have created differentiated activities in their

lessons in literacy and math tailored to the specific needs of these sub groups, divided by Apprentice, Approaching, ELL, On , Above and Beyond. Such targeted practices have led to improved periodic assessment scores and an increase in running record levels from benchmark to benchmark.

- The school embraces the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model when implementing lessons. This method is framed around a process of developing responsibility within the learning process from the teacher to the eventual independence of the learner. A checklist, which was distributed to teachers, supports this model. The list guides ongoing checks for understanding allowing teachers to record whether or not each student: understands the mini-lesson, is engaging in accountable talk, and responds to direct instruction questions. When the checklist reveals that students have mastered the desired skills, they are dismissed to their independent group tasks. Students who have yet to meet the learning objective get additional support with the teacher. In addition, students engage in their own self-assessment by reviewing the rubric and student checklists given for particular lessons. This was evident in a fourth grade math class where students in the Advanced and On Level group worked independently while the teacher sat with the intervention group for guided instruction after the mini-lesson. These practices allow teachers to analyze student work and in-class participation to accurately assess each student's level of understanding and make instructional adjustments when needed.
- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvement in learning. (1.3)
 - The principal has hired enough coaches, cluster teachers, as well as an English as a second language teacher to be programmed into classrooms during the literacy block with classroom teachers. The Writing Coach has four periods scheduled in classrooms and two periods coaching with teachers. Cluster teachers have two periods to be in classrooms and four periods for teacher coverages. This allows for two teachers to be in the classrooms. The principal has also purchased various technology in the school. All kindergarten classes have a Promethean Interactive Table which allows up to six users at once to access a wealth of ready-to-use educational activities, tools and resources. Small groups can work together to accomplish a single activity or work independently to contribute toward the completion of a group project. Every classroom has a Promethean board and a document camera. All of this helps students make progress towards school goals, resulting in teacher being able to further differentiate learning and maximize student progress.
 - When the principal realized that there were numerous reading levels in the second grade from either end of the spectrum, he grouped students on the same level, with no more than eleven students in each group. During the literacy block, those students go to an assigned teacher for literacy work. The teacher still differentiates and the gradual release is different. This enables the teacher to do Guided Reading daily. The grade 2 teachers during their grade teacher team meeting track and discuss the progress of those students and change their grouping when necessary. This gives the lowest performers, including English language learners and special education students, targeted academic intervention

with a decreased teacher-to-student ratio, resulting in accelerated progress for all subgroups of students.

- Relationships across the school are warm, supportive and inclusive of students, teachers, and parents who feel valued and who take pride in being part of the school community. (1.4)
 - After analyzing the academic results two years ago and realizing that African-American male students were the most underperforming group, the principal created the Man Up program. Its mission is *“to produce and preserve a positive difference in the lives of all young males”*. A volunteer group of fathers, male teachers, paraprofessionals and the parent coordinator adopt a student for mentoring. If a student misbehaves, they are taken to their mentor to discuss that behavior. Students and their mentors meet every Friday where they talk about life skills, play basketball and check up their behavior. The purpose of the Friday meeting is to mentally prepare students for the weekend. Mentors implement strategies from the book. *“Motivating Black Males to Adhere in School and in Life”* by Baruti K. Kafele. Additionally, the principal works in tandem with mentors to ensure that an abundance of youth development/social activities, such as professional basketball games and movie nights where students see inspirational movies around becoming a man, are in place to accelerate student growth and reinforce the optimistic learning environment. As a result, the Level 1 reading levels of that cohort has decreased 67% from 84% in 2011 to 17% in 2013 based on their Running Record assessments taken the same time period in November.
 - Students and parents appreciate the wide range of offerings that foster academic and personal development. One organization, the Jamaica Bulldogs, encourages students to participate in football and cheerleading teams starting as early as kindergarten. Coaches periodically check on their student’s behavior and their academic progress. The school has 27 students in each grade, starting from Grade 2. During a meeting, the coach talked about how one student who started the program as a Level 1 in reading is now a Level 3. This activity cultivates school pride and an interest in learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all constituent groups are informed with students’ progress in order to be key partners in student’s education. (3.4)
 - According to the principal’s School Self-Evaluation Form (SSEF), the school’s goal is for *“50% of students to be engaged in effective dialogue that will promote academic, social and emotional growth”*. Even though it was evident in classes observed, there were a small number of teachers that could not verbalize this during meetings, resulting in all staff not knowing the expectations of the school and administration.
 - The school community examines and tracks progress toward meeting its goals through a variety of assessments. Parents receive a report in each core curriculum subject at the end of each unit. Though, these reports

capture student progress, they do not provide all assessment results at a glance. This hinders parents' ability to effectively track their child's progress throughout the year and have the greatest impact in their child's education.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Public School 354	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