



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Marathon School

Q811

**61-25 Marathon Parkway
Queens
NY 11362**

Principal: Penny Ryan

Dates of review: March 11-13, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Sheryl L. Watkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P811 is an elementary through high school with 377 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 28% Black, 33% Hispanic, 14% White, 19% Asian students, and 6% American Indian. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 65% of the students enrolled and girls account for 35%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school cohesively integrates the instructional shifts and content standards across all curricula with rigorous tasks and learning experiences resulting in increased achievement for all students. (1.1)
 - The full implementation of the Unique Curriculum for alternate assessment students across all sites and service categories, with the exception of inclusion classes, ensures cohesive instruction in core content areas. Students in inclusion follow the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) based curriculum aligned with their general education peers with the support of teachers and paraprofessionals. Attention to and the integration of the CCLS and the instructional shifts that are included within curriculum maps for all core subject areas for alternate assessment students consistently provides learners at all levels with opportunities to engage in learning experiences that support the generalization of skills learned to other content area and then to vocational pursuits. For example, this month's unit on "Safety" supports content knowledge and related vocabulary development, as it requires students to make connections between safety in school, at home and then to the workplace. In addition, the curriculum provides for the use of varied augmentative communication devices, such as instruments that have multiple buttons for students to push that activate a voice output that has been pre-recorded for students who are unable to speak. This ensures that students have access to and are able to share their learning as well as to cement the focus on high levels of engagement. This has led to a high number of students, approximately 5%, moving to less restrictive service categories. In addition, students with disabilities and English language learners in inclusion classes have met or exceeded New York State and Federal accountability measures for adequate yearly progress in grades 3 through High School and student tasks for self-contained classes now embed extension activities to generalize information learned to real life experiences.
- Consistent attention to beliefs regarding student learning and engagement results in high levels of student engagement and the production of work products that demonstrate increased generalization of learned skills. (1.2)
 - The school consistently practices their beliefs that students learn best when learning takes place through hands-on, real life experiences where multiple opportunities to practice skills are offered. In addition, there are strong practices in place to increase the levels of peer-to-peer communication for students whose disabilities demonstrate struggles in communicating. To ensure this occurs, individual and programmatic augmentative communication devices (ACC) support instruction. To support verbal students, the school consistently provides social scripts for students to follow when interacting with peers and adults. For example, students from the school's Café Marie, the culinary arts program, greet adults, recite a menu of lunch options that may be ordered, and thank customers for their order. Teachers will often prompt students to extend questions to further meet customer's individual

request for meal choices. These supports are reduced as students become more fluent with the process. Supported by focused professional development in components of the Danielson framework, teachers in cohort meetings discuss and implement strategies to extend successful communication practices across classes and to community based learning experiences that ensure decreased levels of prompting and increased levels of interactions. This is evidenced by the ongoing data collection and analysis of curriculum-based and vocationally driven instruction that has resulted in cross-content demonstration of knowledge built in student work products.

- Across sites, strong teaching practices provide multiple entry points across the curriculum to support students' varied learning needs. For example differentiated instruction is augmented through visual supports, ACC devices, iPads, materials provided and supported in Braille, SMARTboard usage and individual, group and peer supports, results in high levels of engagement with learning tasks. In all classrooms, students are grouped for instruction based on formative assessments of functional levels and ongoing data collection, and are provided with learning tasks that are a part of or extensions to the three tiered Unique curriculum being implemented. For example, in order to extend vocabulary development and communication skills, tasks for speech impaired students are designed with pictures and corresponding words so that students, with the aid of computers, are able to construct multiple sentences that allow them to communicate their thinking, thus support their instructional levels. In all classes, paraprofessionals and related service providers such as speech and occupational therapists support mandated students as well as others in small groups during instructional periods. Classroom visits confirm that all students, regardless of ability levels, are highly engaged in learning tasks where frequent supported opportunities to communicate were evident as students demonstrated their thinking and learning.
- Ongoing effective feedback is aligned to teacher goals where a strong system of managing teacher goal ensures professional growth and development. (4.1)
 - Three years of work to fully implement the Danielson Framework has resulted in strong systems for the management, monitoring and follow-up to teacher evaluation. The requirement for teachers to set professional goals ensures that the administration is able to provide targeted professional development, peer and coach support, as well as mentor teachers to move toward best instructional practices for those not meeting pedagogical expectations or for those new to the profession and those who are struggling. An analysis of trends in teacher performance ratings identified two components where improvement was needed. This strategic plan resulted in strong professional development aligned to teachers' individual goals; such as peer intervisitation to observe effective questioning strategies to support critical thinking skills and frequent feedback to observations include that include next steps for improvement school-wide and for specific teacher's growth. The analysis of second and third rounds of teacher observations identified that for those staff members originally rated developing in the areas of using assessment in instruction and questioning and discussion, over 90% have moved to the effective or highly effective levels.

- Through the thoughtful analysis of teacher practices, the school's professional development plans are modified to include identified trends in teacher practice and succession plans are currently in place where veteran staff members are strategically placed to provide opportunities to engage in extensions to their practice for future positions. For example, to fill a short-term leave of a veteran staff member, a strong and effective teacher was asked to change from a classroom position to become a unit teacher, allowing administration to support her as she developed the necessary skills to support her peers for the coming school year. Based on previous successes with student achievement, an additional layer of teacher support is now in place, enabling the staff at this off-site program to benefit from the peer support this position provides. The principal is also supporting three staff members who are currently enrolled in programs to become future school leaders. As a result of both targeted professional development and multiple layers of support for improvements in pedagogy, classroom visits confirmed quality discussions during visits, where students, when able, confirmed they are engaging in more discussions where they must share their thinking.
- The collaboratively developed and strategically planned data-driven school goals ensure year to year development of essential skills with professional development to ensure all students are prepared for future endeavors. (3.1)
 - Building upon the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) over the last few years, there are highly targeted goals that support the mission of the school to provide learning opportunities so that students acquire high levels of communication abilities, engage in pre-vocational community based learning, and provide increased opportunities to request, initiate or engage in conversations with peers and staff. In addition, building upon their prior work to increase teacher effectiveness, continuing supports for collaboratively data-driven goals for teachers ensures high levels of performance of staff. These collaboratively set goals, generated from both a comprehensive needs assessment and the ongoing analysis of formative data related to past and current year's levels of performance and progress have expanded to benefit greater numbers of students. For example, approximately one third of the student population's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) includes mandated augmentative communication devices to ensure they have the means with which to communicate. Detailed action plans related to building these skills has resulted in over 60% of students who use these devices progressing to more complex systems that offer them greater choices of responses and increased opportunities to initiate conversations. To meet the vocational goals, students benefit from in-house pre-vocational classes ranging from a simulated nail salon to graphic production of greeting cards. As a result, 95% of students age 14 and over, have shown growth in pre-vocational skills. In addition, 10 students have earned competitive employment within the community, and 99% of students have earned placements within adult service programs.
- The highly developed school culture ensures student voice with consistent trust and a strong ethic of beliefs in students' abilities, results in academic and social-emotional growth for all. (1.4)
 - To address the needs of students, a collaborative process of addressing issues for some of the most behaviorally challenged students is in place.

The collaboration of the Institute for Behavioral Research (IBR) trained teacher and the board certified behavior analyst (BCBA) staff sharing information and practices is demonstrated in strong behavior and emotional support programs that include professional development to support related service providers and paraprofessionals in effectively interacting with students to support academic and emotional growth. Teacher teams have now come together to use strategies such as identifying antecedent behaviors prior to outburst, and sensory stimulation or deprivation to serve greater numbers of students. As a result, there has been a decrease in behavioral incidents across the sites enabling the school's removal from the State Education Department's list of schools that have been identified as potentially persistently dangerous as of last year.

- The school provides specific behavioral strategies and social supports aligned to school goals through IBR and BCBA to support a safe learning environment. Student voice is demonstrated in the development of clubs that build upon the social emotional learning component of students' educational process. Specifically, student engagement in activities such as Glee club, girls club, Student Council, yearbook club, and band ensure that students have input into extracurricular activities and are able to demonstrate the unique talents they possess. Students state and parents confirm that these extended activities have built self-esteem, ensuring placement in adult service opportunities far beyond original expectations.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend assessment practices to include more sophisticated task/ content based rubrics for higher performing students so teachers can make instructional adjustments to improve learning outcomes for these students. (2.2)
 - The school uses a variety of content specific cohesive assessments aligned to the curriculum, which include but are not limited to Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) and Unique Learning Systems pre- and post- assessments, to provide individual teachers with student specific information related to students' achievement and progress. The school offers a unified grading system whereby all students receive one to four stars as acknowledgement of their work products. However, where appropriate, solely related to the highest performing students, rubrics have not yet been adjusted to include specific criteria for task completion, nor do they allow these students to take greater ownership of their performance and progress in that detailed feedback as to the specific skills needed to enable them to know what they need to do to improve work products is not identified. This limits teachers of these students, opportunities to inform adjustments to instruction and curricula and lessens specific feedback to support targeted students in demonstrating increased mastery in skill specific instructional goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Marathon School	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