



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

John G. Whittier

Elementary School 018

**221 BROADWAY
STATEN ISLAND NY, 10310**

Principal: Robert Rodriguez

**Dates of review: Nov 21 - 22 2013
Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John G. Whittier is an elementary school with 623 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 41% Black, 47% Hispanic, 9% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

What the school does well

- The school has aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) emphasizing reading and writing in all subject areas, fostering college and career readiness on all grades. (1.1)
 - The school community has selected the Ready Gen and Go Math curricula to cognitively engage students and set them on a path towards college and career readiness. Both programs, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), focus on the instructional shifts that include accountable talk and citing text-based evidence to support answers in English language arts as well as solving multi-step problems in math using a variety of different strategies. A school wide vertical team of teachers meets once a week for two hours to strengthen teacher capacity relative to the curriculum and works on building coherent curricula across all grades. They adjust and modify their lesson plans to ensure all students are close reading grade-level texts and include purposeful decisions including targeted grade level planning for guided reading groups and literacy centers. As a result the school is building instructional coherence and promoting college and career readiness for all students.
 - Across grades teachers who meet three periods a week refine curricula using student data to discuss implications for instruction and curriculum modifications to meet student's and relevant student subgroup needs, including English language learners(ELs) and students with disabilities(SWDs). For example, first grade teachers modified writing tasks by creating more challenging rubrics for their first ELA unit when they noticed their students' writing was more advanced than what the curricula task required, incorporating a daily writing workshop to supplement the reading program. Additionally across grades teachers use of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) informs planning and revisions allowing access for all students, including the modification of graphic organizers to support a variety of learners, adjusting pacing to accelerate advanced students, and offering Foundations for students who need additional supports to access and be engaged in the curriculum..
- School administrators ensure that the use of resources, including teacher and student assignments, provides intentionally targeted supports for students to meet the school's instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The school's goals focus on improving ELA and math instruction, engaging students in learning and having students increase academic and social behaviors. To this end, the school's Teacher Resource Center, stocked with a variety of materials, provides a venue for teachers to meet to plan, do individual research for their lessons, and borrow additional books and materials to supplement their classroom instruction. Additionally, a coach provides model lessons for teachers, as well as professional development (PD) that focuses on student data and performance, and differentiated instruction. The coach also leads student groups and provides specific targeted PD to meet individual teacher needs. Partnerships provide enhancements to the school's programs. The school's state of the art Robin Hood library is staffed by a teacher and paraprofessional funded through the Robin Hood Foundation, and community organizations support students in need. For example, as many students in kindergarten through grade 2 need additional reading support Read Alliance, a summer program provides reading remediation to potential hold-over students. Families receive support that ranges from counseling services to English as second language classes from United Activities Unlimited (OST)/Beacon program, and the

UJA Federation. United Activities Unlimited provides an after school program that provides homework support as well as extracurricular activities to promote learning that include karate, art, music and field trips. A partnership with Joseph Dear and Project Teal provides an after school program that offers additional instructional support for students in grades 3 to 5 who are academically below standard. As a result the use of resources and organizational decisions support the school's instructional goals impacting student work products.

- Team meetings are structured so that teachers meet at least three times a week during common planning time to work collaboratively and analyze data. One specific focus of the teams this year is to have a deep understanding of the Ready Gen anchor texts and provide extended learning experiences for students. Thus, the art teacher attends the meetings and works collaboratively with all staff to incorporate theme based projects as responses to literature for grade level class anchor texts. Additionally speech teachers are part of the teacher team meetings so they can frontload concepts and information into their delivery of support for their caseload of students. Academic Intervention Support (AIS) teachers, as a result of the collaboration with classroom teachers and data analysis during teacher team meetings, develop and provide guided reading and strategy lessons to the most at risk students three times a week and facilitate strategic math groups two times a week. As a result of decisions relative to teacher responsibilities for students, the school is effectively closing the achievement gap and supporting access to learning opportunities, leading to student readiness for college and career.
- The school is a safe place and students appreciate the level of support they receive, thus fostering their personal and academic development. (1.4)
 - The school builds a safe and inclusive school culture via many celebrations, to which parents are invited, that recognize students' efforts, including a Super hero's assembly, Student of the Month where each class gets to select two students who have demonstrated diligence and a positive work ethic, and a monthly assembly that highlights students for awards for perfect and improved attendance. The guidance counselor works with the school's targeted population and provides ongoing at-risk counseling, and supervises a group of guidance interns from a local college who work three times a week with at-risk students recommended by their teachers. The interns also have presented an anti-bully assembly to all the students and meet on a monthly basis with a group of students to discuss any concerns students bring to them. Additionally the pupil personnel team meets monthly to discuss at-risk services for students in need of additional support. As a result the principal establishes a sense of trust and positive climate in the school that supports students' developing positive academic and social behaviors.
 - The principal has an open door policy and students indicated that they can go see the principal or guidance counselor at any time to discuss a concern or to talk about a personal situation. To address problems that happen in the playground during recess the principal worked with the School Leadership Team (SLT) to incorporate a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goal of organized recess play in which students choose stations that are led by guidance interns and parent volunteers so that students learn good sportsmanship and safety. Conflicts are addressed immediately through peer mediation and conflict resolution. Additionally parents are contacted immediately to meet with school staff and work collaboratively to address any concerns. The school is a model school who has turn-keyed some of its best practices to other schools focusing on improving attendance. The school has established mentor teachers who have daily check-ins with students who have chronic absenteeism. As they know these

students well and check-in on a daily basis families are immediately called when students are absent. The school also celebrates students improved attendance by recognizing their efforts and saying to them on a daily basis, "I am so glad to see you here today, keep up the good work!" The school also hosted a breakfast for those students, and their families, who had the most improved attendance. Consequently, 95% of the school's students have an attendance rate of 92.1% or higher, the school provides a safe and caring atmosphere for all, and students indicate they love their teachers and enjoy coming to school to learn.

- Across classrooms teachers use ongoing assessments and grading practices and analyze information on student learning for planning and adjusting instruction, resulting in purposeful support for students. (2.2)
 - Teachers begin the year with summative data on students and use it to form initial groups to meet student-learning needs. Students are grouped heterogeneously across grades and staff work collaboratively to pay close attention to initial beginning-year assessments and are constantly focusing on the progress students are making on a daily basis and during end-of-unit assessments. Additionally, all teachers use the Ready Gen and Go Math end-of-unit common assessments to track students' progress and growth Based on these assessments teachers have modified the Ready Gen rubrics, particularly in writing to meet students' learning needs. Teachers also collect "on-the-spot" data through formative assessments that helps them group students for a 30-minute block of independent work time so that students are grouped suitably in a close reading group, reading analysis group, or enrichment group. All teachers also use running records and periodic assessments to track student progress, which has helped teachers' fine tune the differentiation component of Ready Gen. Teachers, use of assessments to inform instruction ensures differentiation instruction is meaningful and taking place as evidenced by small group instruction including guided reading, strategy lessons, and conferring.

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen depth of questioning, student discussion, and use of varied activities in order to enrich and promote students' participation and their developing critical thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Classroom practices are becoming aligned to the Danielson framework for Teaching. Across classrooms there is a culture for learning and respectful environment as evidenced by teachers being well prepared with grade level lesson plans in literacy or math. The school has a shared belief particularly in the areas of planning and preparation and the classroom environment. Routines are evident in both the ELA and math programs as to the questioning and discussions techniques embedded in each lesson. However, although teachers are encouraged to use discussion questions to push student thinking and expose students to cognitively engaging tasks this practices was not sufficiently evident across classrooms so that teachers are asking higher order questions or are using discussion techniques such as turn-and-talk and/or a Socratic seminar to encourage students participation in discussions. As a result teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula leading to uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student work products and discussions.
- Ensure goals are tracked for progress from ongoing data gathering and analysis so that there is a clear understanding of how and when to make adjustments to leverage changes explicitly linked to accelerate student learning. (3.1)

- The school's short list of clear, focused goals and action plans in its CEP, includes professional development planning, and are tracked for progress to drive efforts to accelerate students learning and foster social emotional growth. However, there is only a surface connection of the data gathering and analysis to effecting impact on teacher practice. Furthermore, currently school leaders are developing ways in which to further involve and communicate school improvement plans and decision making with all constituents. Thus, there are missed opportunities to use available information to further the school's quest to address, and make adjustments to meet targets as set forth in its goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: John G. Whittier	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