

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Edwin Markham

Intermediate School 051

**20 Houston Street
Staten Island
NY 10302**

Principal: Nicholas Mele

Dates of review: January 13-14, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

I.S. 51 is an intermediate school with 1,131 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 23% Black, 47% Hispanic, 23% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes deliberate organizational decisions and uses resources to support the school's instructional goals evidenced in meaningful student work. (1.3)
 - The principal makes conscious decisions around allocating resources toward meeting the school's instructional goals. He has contracted with School Data Corp to provide school leaders and teachers with data around subject area assessments so that all faculty members have the appropriate data with which to see trends, plan lessons, and revise units of study to meet students' needs. As a Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) school, the principal has been able to use the supports that the program provides including the use of Word Generation to enrich students' every day and academic vocabulary and tutoring that takes place in an after school program sponsored by Sports and Arts. The principal also has a dedicated literacy coach to support teachers in literacy, particularly around the implementation of the Code X curricula. There are also three peer instructional coaches who have a reduced teaching schedule to support teachers in becoming more effective and a math lead teacher who also has a reduced teacher schedule in order to support fellow math teachers. Additionally, the principal has purchased a number of programs as supplements to zero in on Common Core aligned areas such as the I-Ready program to support students. As a result, the principal's purposeful organizational decisions and use of resources maximize the school's efforts to meet the needs of students as evidenced through Common Core aligned student work products displayed on bulletin boards.
 - The assignment of teachers to students is done in a careful manner so that students' needs are met to the greatest extent possible. The school has three specialty academies, Creative Design, Performing Arts and Media Technology, that students apply to based on their interests. Core subject area teachers within these academies are assigned to teach common groups of students on whom they have a focus. These teachers meet regularly to discuss student academic trends as well as social and emotional issues. Special Education teachers teach students in their content area specialty in both Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) and self-contained classrooms so these students benefit from content area teacher expertise. Additionally, the principal has instituted a 9th period which takes place daily. Students are assigned to particular subject areas with which they need support around basic skills. Teachers tutor students around areas that they need additional assistance with. Consequently, students receive support around skills they need additional assistance with as well as exposure to possible future career options in their academies leading to college and career readiness.
- The principal and his staff work together to create a safe and inclusive learning environment that supports students' adoption of academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)

- The principal prioritizes supporting students in their social and emotional development. The principal has also prioritized attendance improvement this year. One of the supports that chronically absent students receive is through the mentoring program (M & M program). Particular students who are in need of having an adult to talk to are connected with a staff member. These adults check in with students around attendance, homework and behaviors encouraging consistent attendance in school. Perfect attendance for home rooms is announced daily. Additionally, any student from a class that has 100% attendance for that day is eligible to win a pair of movie tickets. Through these initiatives and incentives, student attendance has risen 4% to date. Believing that students need guidance interventions so that discipline infractions are not repeated, the principal has hired a two day a week at-risk guidance counselor to help students with pressing concerns and/or discipline issues. This is in addition to the two full time counselors on staff. One of the principal's non-negotiables is that students, who are suspended, reflect on their behavior with a dean and receive lessons around improved decision making. The principal also encourages student voice. Student Council members meet with the principal and are able to make suggestions and requests which include students now being able to go outdoors at lunch time as well as the formation of a Step team. Students also spoke to having caring adults at school that they can go to with problems and concerns. As a result of these programs, the school's culture has improved with student attending school more regularly and student discipline issues being reduced.
- School leaders are engaging in cycles of observation and are providing feedback and next steps to teachers that are improving teacher effectiveness. (4.1)
 - The school has been using the Danielson framework to provide teachers with feedback over the past few years around targeted components. With the framework now being a major part of the teacher evaluation system, the school is involved with the Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF). A TIF ambassador provides professional development to teachers around domain 4 and looking at artifacts and on component 3b around questioning and discussion. The ambassador also works with new and non-tenured teachers around component 1e, planning and preparation. Three peer instructional coaches and a demonstration teacher work to provide supports for teacher inter-visitation, provide feedback and support teachers in looking at student data to make instructional decisions. Feedback from supervisors began this school year around domain 2 and then moved into domain 3. Through feedback from supervisors, there has been growth for teachers in the use of technology via the use of smart boards and video clips to enhance lessons. One teacher received feedback around allowing students to have more opportunity for discussion with one another and to be less dominant in the discussion. Through feedback and support in structuring discussion around the close reading of text with a focus, the teacher has revamped the structure of discussions in the classrooms using accountable talk stems. Teachers reported that they value the feedback from supervisors as well as the assistance they receive from the resources available at the school. As a result, teachers instructional practices have improved as noted in observation reports.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the needs of a diversity of learners are addressed in unit plans in all subject areas so that all students will have the tools to engage in rigorous, complex tasks. (1.1)
 - The school selected the Code X program as the main curriculum resource for English language arts and the Connected Math Project 3 (CMP3) as the main resource for mathematics. These programs were selected in large part due to their alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and because they reflect the integration of the instructional shifts. Both programs are sufficiently challenging for students mirroring Common Core expectations and students have been exposed to these resources across the school. To that end, special education students and English language learners have difficulty accessing text and problem solving in these programs due to their complexity. The school is only beginning to look at both programs with this view in mind and are working to provide special education students, English language learners and struggling students with access to tasks and texts and to reflect these scaffolds and supports in unit plans. As a result, some students are not able to experience a full understanding of lessons taught.
- Deepen the use of teaching strategies linked to the Danielson Framework for Teaching that enable staff to develop questioning and discussion practices that allow for extension of learning. (1.2)
 - One of the school's goals is to increase student engagement. The belief system at the school is that students should not be passive during lessons and that the teacher should not be the hardest worker in the classroom. Students should be grappling with interesting, rigorous activities. To that end, there has been a focus to increase the use of technology in lessons as well as to communicate the objective of lessons through the use of an agenda at the start of every class so students understand why they are learning what they are learning. In addition, there is a focus on getting students more involved in lessons through the use of various strategies. Teachers were viewed in some classrooms using the "turn and talk" strategy to increase student participation in lessons, however, the opportunities for students to have meaningful chances to discuss their work and thinking with peers was inconsistent. Additionally, in some classrooms, teachers were asking questions that enabled a single path of inquiry or did not enable students to address fellow students' responses. For example, in some classrooms, teachers only accepted one answer from a student and moved on to another idea or example not asking other students to speak to that answer. As a result, there were missed opportunities to further develop student thinking and to extend their learning.
- Extend the practice of the use of rubrics to provide consistent, actionable feedback to students and strengthen students' use of self and peer assessment so that students are aware of their next learning steps. (2.2)

- Although teachers are making use of Common Core aligned rubrics that are a part of assessments used in the CMP 3 and Code X programs, there were some assignments viewed on bulletin boards where rubrics were not used or they were introduced at the end of the assignment. Feedback on some student work was inconsistent with feedback on some assignments being minimal or just addressing procedural aspects of tasks. Some students could not speak to their next steps around particular tasks. The school also administers and provides opportunities for common assessments across the core subject areas ranging from quarterly projects in social studies and science to the Scantron Performance series and the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) in English language arts and I-Ready. Teachers receive data from these assessments yet, in speaking with teachers, some teachers could not speak to how they use data to group students or to provide multiple entry points for students. Furthermore, this circumstance impedes the curriculum modification and the daily planning process as it is not done with a full knowledge of the data of specific sub groups of students. As a result, some students are receiving limited feedback about their work and do not have a full awareness of their next steps and are not consistently being met at their entry points.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Edwin Markham	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