



**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 Port Morris School of Community Leadership

Elementary/Middle School 005

**564 Jackson Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Ms. Mary Padilla

Dates of review: March 4 – 5, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Port Morris School of Community Leadership is an elementary/middle school with 696 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 7. The school population comprises 25% Black, 72% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native and 1% Asian/Multi Racial students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Relationships among students, teachers and school leaders exemplify mutual respect, resulting in an environment that is highly conducive to learning, thus supporting the academic and personal growth of students. (1.4)
 - The Port Morris School of Community Leadership, in its second year of expansion towards middle grades, is a school community with strong systems and structures that address the academic and social emotional needs of all students. Student attendance is celebrated and proudly displayed near the main office so that staff, students, families and visitors can see how the school salutes students' efforts in alignment with the college and career readiness conversations held throughout school activities. Every day staff members welcome students with "Words of Wisdom" setting a positive tone and sense of community to ensure that all students engage in assertive actions that lead to a calm and healthy learning environment. Staff members know students by name and provide immediate support when needed. Students acknowledge that teachers care for them and help them with their struggles. They are very well aware that school administrators have an open-door policy and feel safe knowing they can reach out. The family worker and guidance counselor also conduct frequent check-ins with families and/or students to ensure ongoing outreach that result in preventative and/or intervention services which attend to their individual needs. The school-wide anti-bullying campaign has positively impacted students' behaviors and self-confidence in speaking up when an issue arises. The student government is another forum where students can voice their opinions as well as ideas such as enrichment activities they would like to see in the school. School leaders ensure that all grades engage in a variety of enrichment activities such as art, swimming, ballroom dancing, music and performances where parents can attend and see their children in action. In addition, students participate in team activities such as basketball, track and chess resulting in an inclusive climate where students learn and grow both academically and emotionally. Their engagement in Buddy Reading where the upper grade students read to early grade students has created a nice rapport with younger peers who greet their buddies in the hallway looking forward to reading together. Parents' long-standing relationships with the faculty also serve as important entry points for parents and staff to engage in honest conversations about their children's successes and/or areas in need of focus. As a consequence, staff members encourage parents to keep their children in the school through the middle grades for continued academic and personal growth.
- School leaders make effective organizational decisions well-aligned to the school-wide goals and students' instructional needs that result in improved academic outcomes. (1.3)
 - Instructional goals and students' needs are the focal points of all decisions made around personnel assignments, programs and protocols. School leaders have made a conscientious effort in aligning teacher work time to data-informed small group instruction that results in targeted

support for students. Partnerships with Community based organizations (CBO) afford students optimal opportunities to receive additional instructional or enrichment support. For example, after school CBO programs are designed in collaboration with the school leaders so that the school-wide goals are embedded in these sessions thereby providing students with another layer of instructional support. During their weekly team meetings and additional times provided in their schedules, teachers analyze student work and engage in deep discussions on how to improve their instructional delivery that lead to improved student work products. Teachers collaboratively agree on a goal and an essential question that guide their work on a specific standard as they analyze student work. In-depth discussions lead to teacher reflection and next steps on how to tackle the instructional stumbling block students confront resulting in differentiated tasks for improved student learning. While the conversations remain true to the CCLS expectations, teachers devise and agree on specific strategies and visuals that help struggling students engage in challenging work and make progress. For example, as teachers assess the work of strategy groups, they realize that students continue to struggle with vocabulary and decide on the use of procedural charts that lead to students' conceptualization of meaning as evidenced by assessment results on re-taught lessons. Teachers also meet with coaches and consultants to discuss what students are strong in as well as possible next steps for improvement. Deep conversations on the curriculum maps help teachers identify some causal factors that lead to students' misconceptions, hence, resulting in the refinement of these maps with modified teaching points and scaffolds that engage students in challenging tasks. These concerted efforts to align organizational decisions with student learning needs have led to the triangulation of this formative data across grades resulting in students producing meaningful work products evident in classrooms.

- School leaders provide teachers with effective feedback to increase the level of effective instructional practice leading to professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
 - Building teacher knowledge on effective teaching practices is the focus of the school leaders as they provide meaningful feedback to teachers immediately after conducting formal and informal observations. The Danielson Framework for Teaching is used to guide low inference discussions while school leaders calibrate their ratings to ensure that their perspectives and next steps are equitable as they track teachers' continuum of growth and/or need. Teachers are open to the timely feedback provided by school leaders resulting in targeted professional development and identification as a lab site. In addition, this feedback leads to teachers having conversations around possible trends that need to be addressed at teacher meetings in order to inform delivery of instruction. For example, feedback sessions with teachers lead to teachers focusing their lens of analysis and reflection on re-examining performance tasks that address the existing learning gaps and increase the rigor of the task for improved Common Core alignment. During the vertical team meetings, teachers continue to address gaps, such as vocabulary comprehension, text analysis, and math fluency, uncovered during feedback sessions with school leaders as they analyze student work. These conversations have led to improved instructional practices where teachers conduct inter-visitations amongst colleagues in order to

replicate and/or customize these successful practices to meet the unique needs of their students.

- School leaders and teachers effectively align the curricula to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and content standards to ensure access to engaging tasks that build college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - In order to build coherence and consistency in their instruction, teachers plan collaboratively and make purposeful decisions that result in Common Core aligned lessons across contents and grades. Having elementary and middle grades posed a challenge for school leaders and teachers to ensure a rigorous learning continuum from grade to grade. The implementation of four CCLS-aligned curricula: ReadyGen, Go Math!, Expeditionary Learning and CMP3 provoked much discussion and inquiry amongst faculty and school leaders leading to major adjustments to the school-wide curriculum maps. This adjustment has challenged teachers' thinking on how to address school-wide instructional needs, while remaining true to the individual learning styles of their students, thus ensuring that there is equitable access for all students as the readiness for college and career continues to evolve. Staff members have created a college and career readiness committee where they assess the instruction in conjunction with relevant activities and rigorous tasks that lead to the embedded notion that the community is learning together preparing youngsters critical thinking and problem solving skills for successful life experiences. As teachers meet by grades and content, they decide on essential questions that keep their focus on the attainment of goals. The school-wide curricula assist teachers in the customization of their lesson plans where they include tasks that challenge students to stretch their thinking and articulate their perspectives around specific content topics. The units of study present robust tasks aligned to the CCLS and instructional shifts in order to help students develop their critical thinking skills so that they can articulate their claims and opinions. To build coherence, teachers meet to discuss how to proceed in supporting struggling students so that they can achieve the level of understanding needed to hold a position as they turn and talk or conduct research with their peers. At times, students compare and make connections between content areas as evidenced by their turn and talks and work products. For example, students analyze and examine figurative language which helps them decipher meanings of vocabulary words in other content areas. The evidentiary, intentional learning objectives in lessons have been agreed upon to ensure the progress of all students, including English language learners and special education students. Granular focus on the work produced by these students, as well as students in the lowest third provide teachers with actionable data that leads to the designing of performance tasks and rich instructional activities aligned to students' differentiated entry points for equitable access to in-depth learning across grades and subjects.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine assessment practices to ensure that feedback is actionable thus informing effective instructional adjustment to meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - The school uses a variety of assessment tools to analyze student work and performance. Running records, conferences notes, pre-, mid-, post-unit assessments, and on demand writings provide a snapshot of students' progress as well as areas in need of granular focus for improvement. Results also identify student mastery of skills and possible trends that require teachers to plan for targeted instruction. Peer checklists and reflection sheets give students a voice to share with teachers where they are in their learning and struggles. The school-wide tracking system in place provides a holistic view of students' academic achievement and progress. School leaders use this data stream to show evidence of meeting intended outcomes to accelerate student progress. In addition, classroom teachers use rubrics, checklists and notes as a means to analyze the impact of instruction by tracking student progress and making instructional adjustments to support all learners. Teacher teams are empowered to make instructional and curricula adjustments based on the common assessment results. As teachers compare data vis-à-vis student work, they engage in inquiry-based discussions that challenge them to make research-based decisions on how to support all students' varied learning needs. Additionally, the decision around having students complete entrance/exit slips gives teachers more information to refine their feedback to students. Consequently, progress is noted in the actionable feedback provided to students as teachers assess their work as noted on student work. Most teachers are showing forward thinking related to providing actionable feedback to improve student work. However, this process has not yet translated into all students' clear mastery of expected goals that lead to overall academic success.
- Promote greater consistency in teaching practices so that lessons reflect effective questioning techniques that maximize student thinking and participation in learning activities. (1.2)
 - School leaders ensure that the daily tasks and activities connect to the Danielson Framework for Teaching so that there is clarity around reflection and next steps. Following the school's beliefs about how students learn best, teachers prepare lessons plans with specific standards, learning objectives, academic expectations, and samples of differentiation and entrance/exit slips that guide their delivery in the classroom. As students take risks using discussion prompts, teachers listen in to assess these conversations and provide feedback to all students for individual growth and access to quality education at their vantage points of learning. Resources such as graphic organizers, manipulatives, technology and small group work are geared towards the assurance of supporting all students. Ongoing professional development sessions and inter-visitations are in place to ensure that teachers' questioning techniques effectively engage students in meaningful discussions across grades. However, inconsistent teacher practices linked to higher order questions lead to uneven levels of student cognitive engagement and independent thinking.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Port Morris School of Community Leadership	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