

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

John Peter Zenger

Elementary School 018

**502 Morris Avenue
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Lauren Sewell-Walker, IA

**Dates of review: May 6 -7, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Peter Zenger is an elementary school with 551 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 30% Black, 65% Hispanic, 3% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and teachers ensure the alignment of the curricula to the content and Common Core Learning Standards and planning of academic tasks so that all students have access to challenging work. (1.1)
 - The school uses *ReadyGen* and *Go Math!* as resources to ensure curricula alignment to the expectations of the CCLS. In addition, with the support of an independent professional development company, teachers have written standards-based curriculum maps for social studies and science. Teachers and coaches attend city-wide sessions to build cohesive understanding on how to infuse the instructional shifts and Common Core readiness skills into their planning. For example, during collaborative team meetings, teachers “de-construct” *ReadyGen* to tailor the reading and writing to students’ needs, but, at the same time, ensuring that students use evidence from the text to contextualize their evidentiary arguments leading to rigorous conversations. As teachers use student work to ascertain curricular and instructional needs, they engage in discussions around students’ misconceptions that adversely impact on students’ learning. These discussions lead to agreed-upon scaffolded tasks aligned to units of study to ensure that diverse learners also have access to the curricula for individual success. The variety of data and informational sources as guides to create standards-based work with differentiated strategies. As teachers plan for tiered instruction, they ensure that all learners have access to challenging tasks that lead to improved student work.
- The school uses common assessments, rubrics and checklists to make effective instructional adjustments that meet the needs of all students. (2.2)
 - Data talks provide teachers with the opportunity to deepen their conversations regarding student performance with next steps that result in re-teaching, small group instruction and one-on-one support from Response-to-intervention teachers. In order to determine student progress, the school conducts four cycles of running records throughout the year and uses this information to make targeted decisions to adjust instruction. Cycles of running records and quick checks inform teachers and school leaders about how the instructional adjustments meet students’ needs and the impact on their growth. The analysis of these formative data sources also lead to re-teaching lessons so that struggling students are included in the sphere of instructional success at their learning rate. As a result of the use of rubrics and self-assessment checklists, students engage in learning talks with their peers by providing each other with feedback to learn from each other. Teachers review and discuss the results of the benchmarks and students’ reflective journals to ascertain if students’ self-assessments tell a true story on what they know and what they need to know and understand. These observations are compared to teachers’ own notes and feedback on student work in order to ensure there is an alignment between the checks for understanding and the instructional adjustments made, thus meeting the needs of all students.

- School leaders make effective organizational decisions on the use of student and staff time and other resources to meet the learning needs of students that support meaningful work products. (1.3)
 - In order to increase academic support, the school leader revisited the school organization and planned the budget so that the school day is extended for upper grade students. The hiring of new personnel has led to reduced class size in the lower grades. In addition, the school has organized early grades institutes twice per week after school to focus on guided Reading in support of struggling readers. Consultants work with new teachers on guided reading strategies to enhance their understanding on how these strategies, when implemented well, can positively impact on students' reading stamina and comprehension. During regularly scheduled content planning sessions and inquiry meetings, teachers meet with coaches, consultants as well as with colleagues to discuss the outcomes of their walkthroughs, inter-visitations and analysis of student work in order to focus on interventions that lead to student academic success. In turn, teacher assignment schedules reflect push-in services and small group instruction for all students resulting in targeted and differentiated support that meets students' individual needs. The school's focus on the social, emotional and physical growth of students is evident in the variety of activities provided before, during, and after school such as physical education, arts, dance, photography, journalism and assemblies acknowledging student effort and good behaviors that contribute to a positive communal learning environment. As a result of these organizational decisions, students have access to learning opportunities that lead to meaningful student work products.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that feedback to teachers is consistent and rigorous so that effective and developmental supports lead to school-wide teacher improvement. (4.1)
 - The observation process via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching guides the school leaders in taking low inference notes that lead to norming and calibration of the feedback provided to teachers. School leaders also meet regularly as a cabinet to share their observations and ensure there is consistency in their views as they provide feedback to teachers. Timely conversations between teachers and administrators challenge teachers to refocus their efforts on the improvement of their practices by honing in on the Danielson competencies for professional growth. With the support of the talent coach, school leaders conduct daily walkthroughs and then engage in collaborative sharing sessions resulting in a common language to improve teacher practice. This shared accountability affords participants the opportunity to decide on school-wide next steps leading to targeted professional development and/or inquiry work. For example, one of the inquiry teacher teams focus on the school-wide goal: *differentiation through small group instruction* leading to de-constructing curriculum and tailoring it to the needs of the students. As teachers discuss samples of student work, they observe trends and patterns, thus impacting on their teaching practices. As teachers continue to analyze, they realize the

existing learning gaps and discuss the implications on their delivery of instruction. Although teachers reflect on their practices during meetings, there is a lack of timely, frequent, and consistent written feedback provided to teachers in their observations. This practice adversely affects the need for school-wide coherence and improvement in instructional practice to move student performance.

- Improve teacher pedagogy to ensure that all learners consistently engage in high level performance tasks and discussions resulting in meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - In order for students to reach their highest potential, the school is committed to engage them in leveled instruction addressing their differentiated entry points for access to quality education. In some classrooms, small group instruction and real world experiences afford students learning opportunities to discover and challenge their thinking. Questioning techniques are at the center of instruction in alignment with the tiered practices teachers implement for student improvement. As students “Think, Pair and Share” and decide on certain strategies to move forward in their learning, teachers pull strategy groups to check for understanding and address any misconceptions. Teachers provide students with a variety of resources such as graphic organizers, manipulatives and the use of technology to enhance their learning and meet them at their individual learning styles. However, although these practices attempt to provide students with support for instructional growth, not all student work products demonstrate high levels of thinking and for all students. In addition, as students meet with their peers to discuss and assess their work using self-assessment checklists, the level of student participation as they articulate their observations is uneven.
- Develop school-wide process to evaluate and adjust the effectiveness of instructional practices and curricular adjustments to ensure consistency in the delivery of instruction across classrooms that support student mastery. (5.1)
 - School leaders meet regularly with teachers to reflect on practices observed in classes. The consultants and coaches also discuss with teachers the curricular and assessment practices as well as the adjustments made thus far in response to student needs. For example, the units of study for *ReadyGen* have been adjusted based on their formative assessments in daily classes. Teacher teams hold conversations on what has worked based on their analysis of student work. Individual data talks take place to assess teachers’ areas in need of focus in order to meet the expectations of the CCLS and the city-wide instructional expectations. However, the triangulation of evaluating effectiveness of teaching practices, observational feedback, formative assessment results and outcomes of student work analysis is inconsistent leading to a lack of alignment of all systems and processes for school-wide improvement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: John Peter Zenger	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