

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The New Children's School

Elementary School x023

**2151 Washington Ave
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Shirley Torres

Dates of review: October 22 – 23, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The New Children's School is an elementary school with 600 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 37% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 36% 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 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curriculum engages students in demanding tasks that promote rigorous habits and builds curricula coherence. (1. 1)
 - School leaders strategically chose to continue to use Columbia University Teachers' College (TC) units of study, which they had aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards over the course of two years, and which two TC consultants continue to work with teachers to support ongoing alignment of units to CCLS. Teachers use of the Depth of Knowledge rubric ensure unit embedded tasks are rigorous. Additionally, a review of the units of study and grade lesson plans reveal a curriculum that expands student learning experiences from one grade to the next. For example, in a third grade class students analyzed story characters by closely examining the character's feelings, actions, and motivation. In the fourth grade, students extended their thinking about story characters by analyzing how the character changes over time in the book. Working from feedback from teachers about the math curriculum the school was using, school leaders chose to introduce a new math common core curriculum. In collaboration with a consultant from the organization Generation Ready, teachers modify the curriculum to meet the needs of students by reducing the number of lessons in a unit and pacing the lessons to support students' deeper understanding of the math concepts. As a result, the school's adoption of common core curricula ensures coherence across grades that engage students in rigorous tasks.
 - Common Core aligned rigorous tasks are embedded at the end of the units of study. For example, in a fourth grade class, students shared their particular claims about a topic of interest and provided evidence from text read to support their stance. One student argued that children should be permitted to purchase "label" sneakers verses sneakers that are not popular or fashionable. The student provided research evidence from a variety of sources to suggest the sneakers were comfortable and provided children with the ability to walk for extended periods at a time, thus children would remain healthy. All students including English language learners and special education students participated in discussions, read from a variety of leveled texts, and sought evidence from the texts to support their claim, thus allowing them, to engage in a rigorous CCLS aligned tasks elevating their thinking to higher levels.
- Across classrooms, teacher practice reflects a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn that supports all learners. (1. 2)
 - Informed by Danielson's Framework around engaging students in learning, the school's teaching practice emanates from the belief that

students learn best if they are actively engaged in their own learning and interacting with one another. Classroom visits reveal students working in small collaborative groups, participating in turn-and-talk conversations about their work, and using hands on materials to deepen their understanding about a lesson. In a fifth grade classroom students discussed their theory of the development of the character from the beginning of the book to the end. In group discussions, they speculated and shared their thinking about what motivated the character's actions and change. In a fourth grade class of special education students, students worked collaboratively in either pairs or triads on finding multiples of numbers using a number chart or other strategies to arrive at their responses. As a result of designing coherent instruction, students engage in learning experiences that promotes student understanding of lessons.

- Instruction that meets the needs of all learners is an integral component of classroom practice. Teachers are comfortable facilitating multiple groups working on different tasks. In a second grade classroom after reading student-writing pieces, the teacher strategically paired English language learners with proficient English speaking students so they may share transitional words that would support the ELL learner to improve their writing. In a fifth grade Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) class, the teacher modified the lessons to attend to the learning needs of the students. While some students worked on different graphic organizers, a small group of students received targeted instruction to help them grasp the concept of character change in a text. As a result of these instructional modifications, lessons provide multiple entry points so that all students engage in meaningful discussions and completion of meaningful tasks.
- School leaders use a consistent system for observing teacher pedagogy that results in improved instructional practice. (4.1)
 - The school's participation in the NYCDOE Teacher Evaluation Pilot provided teachers with sufficient information and support in order to arrive at a common understanding of Danielson's framework. The principal and assistant principals initially conducted observations together and engaged in watching videos of teacher practice allowing them to norm feedback to teachers. Frequent informal visits to classrooms informed school leaders of the need to provide different levels of support to teachers around planning and preparation. Lead teachers and mentors meet with both new and veteran teachers to share and discuss the components of exemplary lessons and plans. Thus far this school year, based on classroom visits that provide targeted feedback, teacher practice is evidencing that only 10% of teachers, down from 20% the previous year, fall in the ineffective rating in any given domain.
 - Information culled from frequent informal observations revealed, teachers in need of support in the area of planning and preparation, thus school leaders identified teachers with expertise to support their colleagues with questioning techniques. Teacher leaders schedule lab-sites, classroom inter-visitations, and engage teachers in professional learning opportunities such as critical friends so that they participate in discussions about teacher practice. As a result, teachers are reflective about their

questioning techniques and close to 20% of teachers have improved in this component over the past year.

- The school promotes a culture of mutual respect supporting student learning and cultivating positive student behaviors, which bolster student social and emotional growth. (1.4)
 - Students share they love to come to school and parents state the principal and staff know students and take care of them well. School leaders' implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) contributes to a school culture where there is discipline and a climate conducive to learning. Students participate in character education lessons that support them in exercising academic and social behaviors needed to be successful in school and be prepared for a college or career path. Since close to 40% of the students are students with disabilities, teachers participate in District 75 workshops that support them in using strategies to support the subgroup. Students state the principal maintains an open door policy where they can speak to her at any time and she is always there to listen. As a result, the school has experienced a 5% decline in major incidents since the beginning of the year as measured by the School wide Information Support System (SWISS).
 - Teacher Leader Teams and a Response to Intervention (RTI) teacher team meet weekly to discuss student academic and social behaviors. Teachers delve deeply via student case studies to examine possible reasons for poor student social behaviors and academic performance. During an RTI meeting, teachers analyzed a particular student's anecdotal log and brainstormed strategies and supports for the student. Parent outreach, student behavioral charts, small group instruction, and immediate in house counseling were some of the identified strategies by the team. In addition, to ensure ongoing outreach and connection with parents, the school offers parents a morning English as a second language class throughout the year, send monthly newsletters and cluster teachers send a monthly synopsis of their program. As a result, 75% of parents attended the school's first open house.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve the alignment of interim assessments and grading policies across classrooms/grades to engage students in self-assessments and help them identify their next learning steps. (2.2)
 - Teacher teams use end-of-unit tests, pre- and post-assessments, and rubrics for aligned Common Core Standards across subjects to inform curricula and instructional decisions, and gain information about student learning and achievement. However, while the development of rubrics provides students with actionable feedback about their work, feedback is not sufficiently clear so that students are aware of next steps for full mastery of standards and beyond, thus limiting students from maximizing their learning potential.
 - Across classrooms, teachers consistently use conference notes, running records, rubrics, student turn-and-talks, and other strategies to check for student understanding of lessons taught and for them to make

instructional adjustments to meet student-learning needs. However, student use of rubrics to self-assess is not systemically embedded across grades. As a result, there are limited opportunities for students to be self-reflective about their work and for teachers to make instructional adjustments that guide students to the next steps so that they may attain higher levels of performance.

- Re-evaluate the management of resources to support school programs that provide extended learning opportunities for all students so that they may continue to attain standard levels work. (1.3).
 - The principal's use of resources is aligned to the school's instructional goals that support the production of student meaningful work. Classrooms are equipped with SMART boards and document cameras; teachers establish flexible fluid small groups that support students learning work in collaborative groups. Teachers work closely with consultants in both math and English language arts. However, organizational plans that provide struggling students with needed interventions is insufficient, thus hindering continued school improvement that moves students work to at higher levels.
 - The principal's decision to move key teachers based on their strengths and expertise to upper grades from lower grades has provided students with consistency in a school that expanded from a pre-kindergarten through second grade to a school of pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Students are aware of academic expectations and as a result this facilitates student transition from one grade to another. Additionally, the school leader's strategic decision to place a second adult in the vast majority of classes in a school where close to 40% of students are special education students minimizes the student to teacher ratio and allows each teacher to provide student subgroups with the targeted social emotional support they need. However, targeted programs for struggling students to receive additional support beyond or during the school day are limited, thus minimizing the opportunity for targeted students to receive the additional time and supports needed to extend their academic learning.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The New Children's 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