



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Spuyten Duyvil School

X024

**660 West 236th Street
Bronx
NY 10463**

Principal: Donna Connelly

Dates of review: November 19 – 20, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P. S .24 is an elementary school with 934 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 8% Black, 37% Hispanic, 45% White, 8% Asian and 2% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 6% 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 94.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's aligned CCLS curriculum embeds challenging academic tasks that promotes student thinking and engages students in rigorous learning experiences. (1.1)
 - School leaders chose to continue to use the literacy units of study they aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) over the past two years and staff are supported in further aligning units of study by an outside consultant. In the ongoing alignment of the curricula to CCLS, teachers design units that are thematic, integrate content standards, and culminate in projects or performance tasks. A visit to a classroom revealed second grade students using a graphic organizer to support them with writing a persuasive letter to their parents on a topic of their choice. Students provided arguments to support their opinions in their written pieces. Third grade students participated in a study about butterflies in which they engaged in research and read a variety of informational short texts about butterflies. The unit culminated in a grade wide project that required third grade students to create an informational poster about butterflies. As a result, the implementation of the school's curriculum ensures coherence across all grades that engage students in challenging tasks and stimulates student thinking.
 - Teacher analysis of student pre-and post- assessment tasks allows teachers to adjust student groupings and build in lesson modifications that provide access to curricula for all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. In a fifth grade class, differentiated short text provided to a group of students with disabilities and struggling students enabled them to comprehend the topic allowing for an understanding of the concepts of the reading/writing lesson. In a third grade classroom, a shared reading activity with a group of English language learners (ELLs) and the subsequent student discussion facilitated ELL understanding of a poem. Teacher's curricula adaptations support the design of targeted instruction specific to the learning needs of all students. As a result, 10% of ELL students demonstrated gains on the NYS English language arts (ELA) test last year and the majority reached proficiency levels on the New York State English as a second language test (NYSELAT).
- 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, teacher practice reflects the belief system that students learn best when they are in a safe, nurturing environment that immerses students in rigorous learning experiences and engages them in partner talk. Teachers are vested in the practice of engaging students in the discussion of their work via partnerships. In a fourth grade class of gifted and talented students, students were given different math tasks to complete and were required to explain how they solved their problem within their peer group and then to the class as a

whole. In a second grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students working in small groups on a writing piece used a checklist to comment on and discuss each other's work. In a fourth grade class, students engaged in reading both a whole class text and texts with differentiated content and were expected to discuss with each other and comment on how they felt about the different reading experiences. After discussions with each other, the fourth graders opined that they preferred the differentiated reading experience because they were able to learn from each other. Student discussions encouraged students to reflect on the impact of their comments and the importance of providing meaningful feedback to each other. As a result, students are challenged to produce strong work products that accelerate student learning and promote standard level meaningful work.

- Teachers develop and use common assessments to make curricula adjustments and inform instructional decisions. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers use rubrics, checklists, end of unit tests, pre- and post-assessments to provide feedback to students that inform them of the level of their work. Furthermore, information gathered from Fountas and Pinnell (F & P) assessments inform teachers and students of their independent reading levels enabling students to read “just right” books and move to reading not only at their benchmark levels but also beyond. In addition, fourth and fifth grade students shared that teachers check their work and the information gathered from rubrics informs teachers of the need to confer with specific students. As a result of these practices, feedback to students is actionable and allows for a clear understanding of student progress toward mastery of targeted standards.
 - Teachers look at student work and data culled from iReady web based assessments to adjust instruction. Teacher team analysis of fourth grade student work from a social studies integrated unit of study about Native Americans informed teachers about the need to group students with similar patterns of need for targeted small group instruction. In addition, the analysis of student work apprised teachers of the need to design a student peer review protocol that encouraged students to support each other in writing to meet levels of mastery. As a result, adjustments made to instruction engage students in learning experiences that provide the necessary supports to accelerate student learning.
- The school has a safe, supportive, and respectful learning environment that promotes both student and adult learning. (1.4)
 - The school's tone is warm and welcoming. Students overwhelmingly stated they feel safe and spiritedly shared that teachers “totally” respect them, and teachers encourage student voice and initiative. Students say they have choice on projects they complete and they can easily bring suggestions to staff. Students report that they made an appeal to teachers to perform a talent show. The request was honored and teachers assisted in the process. Furthermore, school leaders support student involvement in civic activities and students say they select the organizations they wish to support. Student government members decided to raise funds to purchase a goat for families in an African village and fifth grade students serve on a committee and coordinate their own graduation events. As a

result of the inclusive school culture, students participate in leading projects that align to the school goals and support continued school growth.

- School guidance and trained teachers support students with academic and personal concerns. Child study teams meet weekly to discuss students that are experiencing difficulty. Teachers take responsibility for reporting potential risks and work with the team to design short- or long-term plans so that guidance and academic referrals can be initiated and students receive the needed academic and emotional supports. In addition, teachers receiving training at NYCDOE Educators for Social Responsibility sessions provide workshops to other staff members around conflict resolution, and a peer mediation team supports students in resolving their own conflicts. As a result of strong staff guidance and advisement, students deeply comprehend the academic and personal behaviors they need to be successful, and as evidenced on the school's online reporting school system (ORSS) the school has experienced a decrease in both major and minor student behavior infractions over the last year.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen systems that communicate high expectations to all constituents and provide all stakeholders with feedback that promotes student achievement. (3.4)
 - School leaders dedicate time at faculty and grade meetings to articulate the expectations of Danielson's Framework with a specific focus on classroom environment and planning and preparation. E-mails and research based curriculum articles shared by the school leaders with staff provide teachers with additional information aligned to Danielson's Framework. Frequent visits by school leaders to classrooms to observe teacher practice, and the verbal feedback provided, encourage teachers to be reflective about their practice. However, a culture where teachers and school leaders share the same understanding to and commitment of mutual accountability for improved teacher practice is not yet evident school wide, thus hindering teacher's ability to refine their practice to further support student learning.
 - Faculty and school leaders consistently communicate the school's expectations to parents and families. Grade specific curriculum nights, monthly parents' association meetings, class celebrations, parent coordinator workshops, and school wide events serve as the venue through which families are informed about curriculum and the shifts demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. However, there are limited systems that provide parents with on-going information about their children's progress. As result, there are insufficient opportunities for parents to partner with the school to gain information that would help them to support their children toward progress of mastery of the standards and beyond.
- Enhance teacher observation and professional learning so all teachers elevate instructional practices that result in further improving student academic performance. (4.1)

- School leaders use Danielson as a research-based framework for formal and informal observations, allowing them to identify teacher strengths and needs. One-to-one mentoring for new teachers, and professional development driven by teachers' needs, is an outgrowth of observations. However, a structure that includes in-depth analyses of student work as a part of the observation process to identify the impact of classroom strategies on student learning is not yet a well-rooted practice. Consequently, feedback to teachers misses out on providing feedback using a full spectrum of information to further improve practice.
- Feedback to teachers by school leaders captures classroom practices and articulates expectations with next steps. Results from the first round of informal observations identified that most teachers need additional support on ensuring greater opportunities so all students are engaged in their learning, a focus of much of this year's professional development. However, while some teachers have identified personal growth areas, the school has not yet incorporated all teachers setting professional goals. Thus, the feedback provided speaks to overarching school goals for effective teaching, but not always to the specifics that individual teachers have identified for themselves as needed next steps to improve their practice. Thus, the full impact of using Danielson to improve teaching practices school wide is not yet evident.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Spuyten Duyvil 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