



**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 Timothy Dwight Elementary School

X033

**2424 Jerome Ave
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Ms. Lynette Santos

Dates of review: December 10 - 11, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Timothy Dwight is an elementary school with 1,053 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 10% Black, 85% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% Asian and 2% other students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 11% 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 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's safe and caring environment supports the growth of student academic and personal behaviors. (1.4)
 - School leaders' school wide implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS), has dramatically changed the culture of the school over a two year period. Staff state there has been a dramatic improvement in student personal behaviors resulting in an environment highly conducive to learning. Students share overwhelmingly that the school is exceptionally safe due in fact to teachers that care for them and a "really responsible principal." Parents describe the excitement their children display each time they receive star rewards and are highlighted in the school's monthly newsletter. They express that PBIS and the school's two way communication between families and the school, cultivates a common understanding of behaviors their children need to practice to be successful and has resulted in markedly transforming the school climate. As a result, the school has experienced an impressive decrease of both minor and major infractions of over 50% over the past two years and greater than 70% since the beginning of the year compared to the same time last year.
 - Daily morning messages and a school monthly newsletter highlight students displaying positive academic and personal behaviors. Monthly celebrations are held honoring students with perfect attendance. Well attended family workshops held monthly inform parents of student behaviors. Consequently, children hear the same message about student academic and personal behaviors from both the school and the parents. Weekly guidance student team meetings help teach struggling students how to adopt more effective behaviors that lead to success in school and throughout life. Students say they know they can talk to their teachers about anything and that the adults will listen. Parents expressed similar sentiments as they feel they can frequently call the school and teachers to get support for their children. In addition, groups of students stated that they treat teachers with respect and in turn teachers treat them with respect so they are able to "learn better." As a result, students know well the behaviors needed to succeed and are confident they can continue to excel in their roles as students.
- School leaders and faculty make meaningful curricular decisions aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that build coherence and engage all students in challenging academic tasks. (1.1)
 - The principal and staff reviewed a variety of curriculum resources and chose to adopt a new curriculum that was more closely aligned to the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in English language arts. The school's careful analysis of the new curriculum revealed gaps in the standards addressed in the units. Consequently, school leaders selected to blend components from their previous units from Columbia University Teachers College into their new units of study. For example, a review of the school's units of study in English language

arts revealed that in order to further integrate the instructional shifts of the CCLS, curricula needed to be tailored to include 65% - 75% of units focusing on students reading informational text. In one instance, in order to support English language learners, student with disabilities and students struggling to understand a math task, a review of a lesson in a math unit on multiplication problem solving revealed the unit was modified to focus on difficult math terminology at the beginning of a small group lesson. The unit was further adapted to meet the needs of these sub-groups by including math problems with tiered levels of difficulty for students to complete, thus supporting student access and understanding of lessons. As a result of these curricular adaptations, the school has designed a sound curriculum that is aligned to the CCLS and builds coherence across all grades.

- Teachers engage in weekly “data talk” sessions where they review student information culled from a variety of assessments such as; Developmental Reading Assessment, state tests and student baselines. Teacher teams analyze grade trends and class trends and adjust the curriculum accordingly to address the needs of all students. To facilitate entry points into the curricula for English language learners and students with disabilities, teacher teams designed curriculum maps, units and lesson plans to include modifications for these sub groups. In a 5th grade classroom, a review of the teacher lesson plans included tiered questions to support the needs of the English language learner. In a second grade classroom, the unit of study included difficult vocabulary from *Charlotte’s Web* that the teacher addressed at the beginning of the lesson so students with disabilities and other struggling students would understand specific words and may gain meaning and understanding from the story read to them. Strategic curricula revisions help teachers to thoughtfully engage all students in lessons that deepen their understanding and thinking resulting in a 9% increase of students with disabilities attaining standard performance levels on the 2012 – 2013 New York State English language arts test.
- Teacher teams and individual teachers use assessment results from various sources to effectively adjust curricula. (2.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers use rubrics and predictive assessments to provide feedback to students that inform them of their next steps in their work. In addition, information gathered from Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) inform teachers and students of their independent reading levels making it possible for students to read books at their benchmark levels and supporting them to aspire to read beyond their levels. Students spoke of the teacher written feedback on their work that points out errors and gives them their next steps on how to improve their work. Moreover, students shared that the criteria charts and checklist designed by their teachers help them to improve their work. Feedback to students is actionable and allows students to gain a clear roadmap of the path they need to take to advance toward mastery of the standards, thus close to 33% of students performed at or above level on simulated tests reflecting a 10% increase from the same time last year.
 - Teacher use of common assessments provides them with a clear picture of student progress toward standards. For example, analysis of student

baseline work in student narrative writing pieces informed teachers of the need to support students in organizing their written ideas. Therefore, teachers introduced several thinking maps to students to assist them in organizing their writing. In another instance, fifth grade performance assessment task results informed teachers that students were struggling with understanding key words in stories read. Consequently, to support student understanding of unknown words, teachers modified their units to include lessons on context clues. As a result, curricula adjustments provide the necessary supports to accelerate student learning resulting in a 13% increase in standard performance on student pre – assessment to post- assessment narrative writing task.

- School leaders' effective feedback from observations informs teacher professional development that promotes teacher reflection and growth. (4.1)
 - A review of the principal's and assistant principals' observation reports reveal consistent, targeted feedback that cites specific Danielson framework competencies and captures teachers' strengths and areas of concern. Administrators provide teachers with clear next steps particularly around student collaborative work and discussion. For example, in written feedback, the principal shared with a teacher that she needed to support students in making their thinking visible. Next steps guidance from the principal stated that students could make their thinking visible by having them work out a problem together and share their problem solving strategies with a partner and peers. Consequently, the teacher shared that she had included time for students to work collaboratively on solving a problem in small groups, discussing with each other and presenting how they solved their problem to other groups in the class. As a result of precise feedback like this, there is a clear blueprint of expectations for elevating teacher instructional practice.
 - School leaders' information culled from classroom observations inform the school's teacher development plan. Teacher sessions with New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) talent coaches further supports teacher effectiveness. Their participation in classroom inter-visitations and peer review of lessons promote teacher growth. Opportunities for teachers to participate in professional learning through outside sources including Bank Street School of Education and NYCDOE professional development has resulted in changes in teacher assignments where teachers assumed various leadership roles such as coaches, lead teachers, grade leaders and curriculum team facilitators. As a result, there is a school wide collegial environment in which teachers are reflective about their practice, which elevates the quality of teaching and provides valuable learning experiences for students.

What the school needs to improve

- Strategically provide multiple entry points into curricula so that all learners including high performing students are engaged in appropriate tasks that accelerate learning. (1.2)
 - School leaders and teachers believe students learn best by providing all students including English language learners and students with

disabilities, with the opportunity to access both curricula and lessons through a variety of strategies. The school has successfully improved learning outcomes for its sub-groups, especially for students with disabilities, by incorporating differentiated and scaffolding learning experiences. Teacher lessons and units of study clearly enumerate multiple ways to provide support for struggling students. Student ability groupings, flexible grouping, one to one conferences, use of manipulative material and thinking maps are modifications noted on units and observed in classroom visits. However, tasks and structures to support students approaching or performing at standard levels are not yet a common practice, thus hindering higher order learning experiences for these students to excel to standard levels and beyond.

- Across classrooms students engage in partner talk and frequently use accountable talk structures to discuss their work. Teachers worked closely with outside organizations such as Turn Around for Children and Learner Centered Initiatives to further develop expertise in student discussion techniques and developed a repertoire of strategies to engage students in conversations. However, structures that deeply steep students in rich discussions and an exchange of student thinking where students benefit from listening to multiple perspectives are not yet customary practices. As a result, instructional discussions do not fully stimulate students' critical thinking, particularly for students performing at more advanced levels, thus limiting students from meeting their academic potential and fully owning their work.
- Enhance the work of teacher teams to include the deep analysis of student work to inform instructional adjustments that accelerate student learning. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams meet twice a week in a variety of configurations including vertical, horizontal, curriculum, data and Danielson's teams to either adjust curriculum, examine teacher practice and study student assessment results and work. For example, the work of one teacher team was to study the various domains of Danielson's framework and observe these in practice as a colleague taught. Initially, this team examined the teacher's lesson plan to ensure it incorporated key components of planning and observed the actual lesson providing the teacher with low inference comments about the executed lesson. While this practice strengthens teacher instructional practice and builds instructional coherence, teachers' feedback during this process captured teacher strengths of lesson but did not fully address areas that further enhanced the teacher's instructional practice. As a result, this limited the experience for teachers to continue to grow professionally in ways that would further increase students' learning and achievement, thus hindering the probability of meeting the school's goal of increasing student performance.
 - Teacher teams meet to analyze student work. In looking closely at student work, one teacher team examined a set of student math problems and collectively identified what students needed to improve and what students did well. Teachers monitored student progress commenting that particular students completed the task, underlined key words within the problem and followed the steps to solve the problem. The team also adjusted the lesson to include additional supports for English language learners and students with disabilities. However, there were limited

suggestions made that addressed teacher practice that would support students toward mastery of key standards. As a result, there were missed opportunities for teachers to identify clear next steps for strengthening their instructional capacity that advances student progress toward higher levels of achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Timothy Dwight Elementary 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