



**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 Bennington School

11X076

**900 Adee Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Louise Sedotto

Dates of review: November 25 - 26, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth A. White

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Bennington is an elementary school with 1064 students from kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 48% Black, 42% Hispanic, 5% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has effectively taken steps to embed key foci into the curricula, based on Common Core Standards, resulting in the promotion of content area mastery to support college and career readiness efforts. (1.1)
 - The school has selected vocabulary and assessment as key foci while using the citywide curricular choices as standards based curricula. This includes the creation of performance-based assessments. It also involves the strategic sharing of common core based curricula to staff across disciplines, to ensure that all students have access to rigorous tasks. For example, as a complement to reading instruction, the task for a library media class requires students to research Spiders and Ecosystems, using domain specific vocabulary in note taking tables to aid in capturing text-based evidence to support a claim. During a carousel activity, another task allows students to visit stations in cycles, to respond (add on, agree or disagree) to their peers' perspectives on a community chart, using chart paper. Details from their individual research will be used to provoke deeper thought or questions about the content. This will also serve as an assessment tool to inform instruction. Similarly, in an art lesson plan, anchor texts from the literacy curriculum serve as the subject matter for artistic exploration. For example, students were asked to create a depiction of a pivotal scene from an English language arts text, using markers and watercolor. As this task requires students to apply artistic approaches such as brush stroke, color choice, and filling space (considerations), it also reinforces text based understandings, while giving a diversity of students an alternative way to apply and demonstrate their thinking. The integration of instructional shifts in multiple disciplines builds coherence across subjects. These efforts have led to an improvement of student performance in writing tasks for all subgroups, as evidenced by informational writing samples, thereby contributing to career and college readiness.
- Across classrooms, engaging instructional practice is aligned to curricula, enabling all students to demonstrate learning through a variety of means, resulting in work products that reflect high levels of thinking. (1.2)
 - The majority of classrooms show similarities in classroom routines to effectively support student learning. For example, through modeling during English language arts and math mini lessons, teachers set clear expectations for students. Teachers use "Clip board assessments" while students engage in group tasks, thereby assisting teachers in identifying students that require additional direct instruction. This enables teachers to convene small groups of students to support their areas of deficiency. During science instruction in an Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) class, the teacher asked students to turn and talk to discuss their predictions about which materials would float or sink, prior to their hands-on exploration. The cluster teacher provided questions for the paraprofessionals to ask students during group experimentation, enabling the paraprofessionals to engage students, including students with disabilities, in the scientific thinking and vocabulary associated with the

topic at hand. These various practices demonstrate effective use of multiple entry points and result in student success with new learning, as evidenced by work products such as student developed multi step multiplication questions, informational writing assignments (e.g. Jane Goodall compositions), and lab reports documenting findings of science experiments.

- The school has strategically aligned programmatic and organizational resources to improve student outcomes, resulting in effective supports for the needs of all learners. (1.3)
 - Teacher team meetings and common planning time for all staff occur weekly, engaging all teachers in ongoing reflective practices. This has strengthened the link between curricula and improved instructional practice, resulting in increased alignment with student learning expectations based on Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teams consistently supplement summative data through ongoing analysis of student performance on curricular assessments, using information such as, “*Closing the Gap Data*” (grade 2 English language arts) and analysis of student misconceptions (grade 5 math). This effective use of teacher time has resulted in meaningful feedback which is then used to identify “teaching points”, like “English language learners and students with disabilities sketching or drawing first, to support writing long and strong”, as well as using deficit skill topics from prior units in math, such as “*The Problem of the Day*” content to support learning, leading to successful adjustments in pedagogical practice to insure challenging tasks for students.
 - Academic Intervention Service (AIS) staff and teachers of English language learners, take responsibility for the progress of student groups they service. They use plans developed at the beginning of the year to monitor student progress for each group serviced and conduct progress checks at intervals during the year. Using programs they were trained in, such as *Leveled Literacy Intervention* (LLI) and *Imagine Learning* programs, they offer targeted support to groups of students, both during the school day and after school. Based on November’s progress analysis, interventions have resulted in progress towards proficiency as demonstrated by *Fountas & Pinnell* assessment reading level gains and positive movement towards English proficiency, thereby promoting college and career readiness.
- The school gathers and analyzes data from multiple sources to identify strengths and areas for improvement, leading to effective adjustments in pedagogical practice. (2.2)
 - The school’s use of common assessments, diagnostic and benchmark data provides teachers with actionable feedback to determine student progress. Rubric-based analysis of student work, *Ready Gen* (English Language Arts) unit tests, *Go Math* chapter tests, Fountas & Pinnell assessment, LLI monitoring sheets and Imagine Learning data are many of the tools used to serve as barometers of student achievement. Teachers use pre-test unit data to identify student strengths and challenges with content to be taught. This enables teachers to determine implications for teaching, resulting in strategy development aligned to

curricula and student needs. Using these multiple sources of information also strengthens the capacity of teachers to use actionable data to track student progress and make instructional adjustments. For example, using feedback from common pre-unit assessments, teachers identify pre-requisite skills and refine teaching strategies and grade-based rubrics to clearly align instruction to the requirements of unit tasks. This effective use of results of ongoing assessments provides worthwhile feedback to teachers, enabling them to make adjustments to support all students' learning needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that all teachers consistently benefit from supervisory visits that result in clearly defined and actionable next steps for teacher development, based on feedback linked to student outcomes. (4.1)
 - Prior participation in the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot (TEP) has facilitated the implementation of the Danielson Framework to support and evaluate teaching. Teachers self-reflect on their practice and administrators have worked to norm their use of the rubric to provide consistent feedback. Currently however, while feedback is actionable, timeframes for implementation and follow-up are general. For example, at the end of an observation report the evaluator's comment that, *"During future visits to your class, I look forward to observing your implementation of the above recommendations"*, lacks specificity as it does not indicate the length of time expected for implementation of recommendations to occur. In addition, feedback is not always effective as it does not consistently reference student work and data as measures of student progress from lessons observed. These omissions limit the clarity of expectations embedded in next steps recommended by administrators, thus minimizing the impact of feedback in promoting teacher development and accountability for teacher follow up.
- Refine systems for capturing student outcome data to enhance processes for identifying school-wide trends that inform strategic adjustments in the use of resources, to ensure staff and student mastery of CCLS expectations. (5.1)
 - The school utilizes student attendance and suspension rate data to track student behaviors and apply supports as needed. This information is reviewed monthly, analyzed on a school-wide level and is readily available. The impact of this effort is reflected in the improvement of the school's scores for all four quadrants of the most recent School Survey. However, while the school uses teacher team data and classroom data to track student progress and make instructional adjustments, school-wide initiatives and curricular assessments lack close monitoring to capture overall trends, including all subgroups. Likewise, it is unclear if trends from observations results are used to inform school-wide professional development. The inability to articulate specific school-wide data trends results in a limited capacity to share progress with the school community and make adjustments that support student learning and teacher growth based on "big picture" analysis, thus stymieing the impact of school-wide initiatives in improving outcomes for all staff and students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Bennington 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