

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

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09X126

**175 W. 166 Street
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Nadine Kee Foster

Dates of review: April 24-25, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. 126 is an elementary school with 746 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 28% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School Leaders and teachers align curricula to Common Core and other key standards to ensure a range of positive learning experiences to fully engage and support all students in their learning across all content areas. (1.1)
 - To ensure that the literacy curriculum is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and addresses the instructional shifts, the school adopted ReadyGen, which includes complex text, close reading and vocabulary development. Phonics and writing instruction are refined and supplemented with additional writing units, Great Leaps Foundations and Wilson. The school aligned the ReadyGen components to their balanced literacy instructional framework. During this time, students are exposed to social studies and science content as well as author studies. The literacy block provides additional time for independent reading, guided reading, daily vocabulary review and a writing “piece of the week”. The principal contacted Pearson Publishing and requested on-site professional development for her teachers, to support implementation of this program. In mathematics, the adoption of Go Math and the inclusion of Engage NY modules and exemplars provide students with opportunities to build their problem solving skills and learn multiple strategies to use when attacking a word problem. There is also a strong re-teaching component to Go Math which teachers are able to use during grouping, to support at-risk students. Scaffolds for tasks and activities are divided into beginning, middle and end of unit prompts that range from activating prior knowledge to citing textual evidence related to real world social issues. Each unit provides multiple entry points that include visuals, audio supports, manipulatives, and graphic organizers with the same learning outcome. Estrellita, a Spanish phonics program, is also implemented in the early childhood grades to support English Language Learners. As a result, standards based coherent curricula in all subjects is accessible to a variety of learners.
- The school exhibits a safe and nurturing environment, where students and staff respect each other and social and emotional learning programs and structures support staff and students’ academic and personal development. (1.4)
 - The school consistently rewards positive behavior and provides substantial interventions to counter unproductive behavior, and that has resulted in high levels of trust, respectful relationships among students and adults across the school, and an inclusive environment. Thus, according to staff and students interviewed, since last year, there is a positive change in school culture that is attributed to several factors, including improved communication and collaboration among staff, students and their families. Teachers expressed that they feel more supported by the principal this year and they collaborate more with each other during teacher team and committee meetings. There are more meetings focused on students’ academic and social learning than before, thus empowering teachers to manage any challenges related to students’ academic performance and conduct. There are also clearer expectations and guidelines for student behavior, which have been outlined and shared

with all members of the school community, by the administration. The addition of a SAVE room with a full time staff member and social worker interns, has had a positive impact on students' social emotional learning, as evidenced by a significant drop in the number of level 3 and 4 occurrences and an increase in student attendance from 91.0% in the 2013-14 school year to 92.5% to date. The Safety Team conducts a lunch patrol which has contributed to reinforcing positive behavior and there are student led activities such as "No Place for Hate" School Poster Contest, Girl Power/Yoga/Anger Management group, Omega Man and partnerships with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) such as Woodycrest Center for Human Development, all of which support students' emotional and social development. Students are recognized for positive academic and social behaviors through the selection of "Students of the Month" Pledge Leaders, class attendance incentives and National Elementary Honor Society. Staff, students and parents all referred to the school's "Engaging Environment with many Opportunities" (EEO), which allows "everyone to grow and develop". One parent said, "This year everyone is happy, smiling and growing".

- The school consistently communicates high expectations in many ways, including via a schoolwide focus on rigor and public displays of performance data that leave staff, students and parents in no doubt about what they are striving for. (3.4)
 - The principal has focused this year's goals around the question, "What is rigor". Teachers articulated that at P.S. 126, rigor is the high expectations of student learning, as measured by the Depth of Knowledge Rubric and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The principal has provided all staff with professional development on understanding the connection to the Danielson Framework. Learning outcomes are explicitly stated and visible at all times and the learning goal is the common thread linking all tasks and activities. There are clear expectations linked to structures for planning questions and discussion activities using Depth of Knowledge as a tool and scaffolds to support students. Administrators meet with teachers and coaches during grade conferences, teacher team meetings and faculty conferences, to ensure that they are addressing all expectations for high quality teaching and learning, including the expectations outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations document. This contributes to a culture of mutual accountability for ongoing staff and student learning across the school. Parents said teachers push students to the next level and that, compared to last year's work, this year's work is significantly more challenging for their children. They also stated that they attended the workshops that the school offered on CCLS to build their understanding of high expectations for their children and how to support them in meeting those expectations. Parents are kept abreast of their children's progress and receive daily and weekly reports so that they can be active partners in supporting their children's progress in learning. One student said, "Teachers challenge us so we can go above and beyond". Bulletin boards celebrate student work and display Students of the Month, National Elementary Honor Society students, classes and students with excellent attendance and Pledge Leaders. "Foster bucks" are given as incentives for promoting good behavior and respect. As a result, student achievement continues to improve, as evidenced by data from performance based assessments.

- A majority of teachers are involved in focused teacher teams that collaboratively analyze assessment data, student work and curricular products, in order to make thoughtful adjustments to teacher practice and curriculum. (4.2)
 - The school leader has set up inquiry based teacher teams which use protocols to examine and refine student and teacher work. These teams include grade level teams, curriculum teams in English language arts, math and technology and a Guided Reading Study Group. At the grade one teacher team meeting, teachers shared data from a Unit 4, Module A assessment which clearly showed improvement in students' writing. Many of the students were able to make connections to the story, "The Giving Tree" and cite evidence, which they could not do before, as evidenced by the former assessment. There was also an improvement in organization of their writing. The teachers had revised this unit after realizing that this story was better suited than the suggested ReadyGen story, to introduce students to personal and physical growth. They explained that they often make adjustments, and/or supplement the program to create a curriculum that meets their students' needs. They created three different performance assessments to meet the needs of each group. The assessments showed that most of the students clearly understood sequencing physical and personal growth so the next step was to focus on understanding author's purpose and meaning. As a result of these meetings, teachers said that they can identify trends and plan instruction for individual and groups of students as they share strategies with their colleagues to support struggling students. The Curriculum Team Meeting was also observed. Their focus was to provide support on the school wide focus of questioning and discussion. Prior to the team meeting, teachers observe each other conducting a lesson, take low inference notes and provide feedback during this forum. The teachers cited discussion techniques they observed and noted which students were using textual evidence to support their ideas and what role the teacher played during instruction. The team used the Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional (ORID) protocol to focus their conversations. At the end of each meeting they propose next steps and develop an action plan that includes re-teaching strategies and other teacher moves, thus ensuring improved teacher practice that contributes to students' progress towards targeted learning outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teaching practices that consistently promote challenging tasks and student discussions across grades and content areas, resulting in high levels of thinking and participation for all students. (1.2)
 - A fourth grade Collaborative Team Teaching (CTT) lesson on exploring culture and nature, engaged students in a Socratic seminar which promoted rich discussions of a rigorous task. Students were asked if they would prefer to live with the people of the Northwest Coast during the winter or summer season. The students had to use evidence from the text they had read, to support their point of view and give specific details. The students used accountable talk language as they agreed, disagreed and added to their classmates' opinions. The teacher further pushed their thinking by asking them to use evidence from the text to compare different types of houses. Similarly, the second grade math

class included a math activity sheet from Engage NY which allowed students the opportunity to solve problems by re-grouping and sharing their strategies through peer to peer discussions. Small group instruction allowed most students to receive additional support from their teacher. However, other lessons were teacher directed with low level questions that did not promote discussion. A special education self-contained first grade literacy lesson engaged students well and provided multiple entry points for different levels. The teacher also attempted to use the strategy of "Team Talk" to promote discussion; however, the questions posed were not designed to encourage deep conversations. Thus although pedagogical practices are beginning to reflect a school wide focus on rigor and strategies for promoting student discussion and independence, these practices are still not evident in all classrooms.

- Continue to deepen the analysis of data generated from common assessments, rubrics and tasks, to identify gaps in learning so that targeted instructional strategies address the needs of all students and improve achievement. (2.2)
 - The school utilizes a wide variety of data based formative and summative assessments, performance tasks, unit tests and student checklists. Fountas & Pinnell running records assess students reading levels three times a year. There is also a baseline/midline/end line school wide writing assessment. Rubrics are utilized to assess and provide teacher feedback to students and other teachers. However, although assessments and rubrics aligned to CCLS are used across the classrooms, there is little actionable feedback provided to students in terms of clear next academic steps as most of the feedback only identifies strengths and weaknesses without a clear understanding and identification of the strategy needed to improve the work. Thus when some students were asked to identify their next learning steps they were able to say what they were weak in but not what they had to do to improve. For example, one student said she often reads and decodes but doesn't remember what she read. She could not articulate any strategies for close reading such as "stop, notice and note", underlining or chunking the text. Thus feedback is not consistently actionable, nor does it typically inform adjustments to curriculum and instruction that are effective in meeting student's learning needs. As a result, students do not have a clear understanding of what their next learning steps are and what strategies are needed to attain them.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Marjorie H. Dunbar 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