



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Family School

Elementary School X443

**1116 Sheridan Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Pamela Lee

Dates of review: March 3 - 4, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Family School is an elementary school with 546 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 67% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 45% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 93.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes key decisions around the budget, staffing assignments, and the use of resources that support instructional goals that increase learning for all students. (1.3)
 - The principal's budget, coupled with staff input, results in the strategic use of resources that are well aligned to the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), and school wide instructional goals. An additional English as a second language position, a math academic intervention services (AIS) position, and two literacy coaches, collaborate and coach individual teachers and teacher teams. The principal and staff made a decision to adopt Go Math a new math program K-5, supplemented with centers from the TERC Investigations program, ReadyGen a new literacy program grades kindergarten through 5, and continue with Learning Cultures curriculum kindergarten through grade 5 to support the literacy program, all of which are aligned with the CCLS. Other initiatives such as technology integration, support students as evidenced in the use of SMART boards and Elmo document readers in all classrooms. Additionally, students in grades 3 through 5, use laptops and iPads in the classrooms as a way to enhance literacy and math lessons. As a result, students benefit from the consistent use of technology tools, supportive of the school's goals around inquiry and academic language development.
 - Teacher assignments and student assignments are strategic as seen in the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes, AIS support in English language arts (ELA) and math, and assistant teachers on each grade who further support classroom teachers by working with students and collaborating to develop instructional plans. As a result individual students and groups of students, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs) receive interventions and are engaged. Staff hold substantial meetings two to three times per week, grouped in a variety of vertical and grade level collaborative teams to conduct inquiry work, plan, strengthen student work by examining assessment results of each unit, identify trends, and adjust curriculum to shift teacher practice. As a result of these strategic decisions, time-on-task is optimized for the entire school community, which is resulting in improved student outcomes as evidenced by comparative assessment data from the State ELA test which shows increment gains in English language arts for students in the lowest one-third.
- The school has created thoughtful structures and supports within a culture of positive attitudes that is responsive to community needs and results in effective academic and personal growth of adults and students. (1.4)
 - The Family School is a supportive learning environment modeled on a nurturing home in which students, families, and staff collaborate to create a lifestyle in which education extends beyond the school. A deep sense of structure, trust, respect, and warmth, permeates the

entire school community. The school is in its fifth year of embracing the Six Agreements developed in collaboration with the staff, well integrated throughout the school, helps to foster the development of an inclusive and respectful school tone. On a daily basis, students engage in a learning cultures approach used to supplement the literacy program, which emphasizes student autonomy, peer accountability, cooperative learning, and face-to-face interaction. A class culture of ethos of encouragement and help was evidenced in a first grade class where a student peer facilitated a student reading group.

- Parents, staff, and students, unanimously agree that the school fosters a safe climate where students' social emotional and academic needs are readily addressed, and serves to underpin the 2% increase in student attendance rate year-to-date. The school's inclusive culture enables every student to be well known by a staff member who helps support his/her academic and social growth. The Asphalt Green recess engagement program run by school aides is one of the many examples of how the staff collaborates to promote positive student behaviors, aligned to the Six Agreements. Notably, students and families appreciate that they can turn to teachers and members of the pupil personnel team to help resolve personal issues and concerns that interfere with learning. Parents indicated that they are kept "fully informed" and that their children are comfortable talking to their teachers about issues of any nature, and that their children thrive in the school's safe environment.
- School staff have developed practices to analyze data to provide them with a view of student performance resulting in adjustments to instruction and intervention to positively impact student outcomes. (2.2)
 - The school uses pre-and post-units assessments, conference notes, checklists, exit slips, and New York State data, to monitor students' learning progress. In addition, school leaders use Google docs to store all school-wide assessment data so that all teachers are able to share promising practices, and cross-reference interdisciplinary data to monitor and track students' learning progress across grades and subjects. Furthermore, pre- and post-assessment data is used to inform interventions and unit plan in all content areas, and measure students' progress toward specific goals. Accordingly, teachers are able to monitor student learning from one unit to another through classroom observation, verbal and written responses, student work samples, and assessment data as evidenced during the fifth and second grade teacher team meetings.
 - Across classrooms, teachers plan for and use various methods of checks for understanding such as student friendly checklists, conference notes, pre-and post-unit tests, and exit slips at the end of each lesson, to identify mastery of concepts, provide students with feedback, or modify lessons if needed. Students have reading, writing, and math self-assessment checklists, and scaffolds such as abbreviated rubrics and graphic organizers are provided to students. As evidenced by classroom visits, students are self-assessing their learning needs and expectations. For example, in one first grade class, students were observed referencing their reading checklist while

completing a reading assignment to identify non-fiction features and ensure they met all the criteria for the assignment. In a fifth grade class students analyze metaphors and similes used in songs such as "Fireworks" and "Hot and Cold" and explain the figurative meaning of the simile or metaphor in the song. Additionally, they were able to share their writing with a peer, discuss how authors use similes and metaphors to help readers visualize and the importance of figurative language on readers and listeners. As such, students are becoming cognizant of the connections between the tasks and the expectations espoused by the CCLS. If needed, teachers make changes or modify instruction based on conferencing with the students or ongoing checks for understanding

- The school supports the development of teacher practice through the strategic use of frequent cycles of classroom observation and ongoing analysis of student work in order to promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - School leaders have developed a schedule to observe teachers using cycles of observations, which includes six observations for each teacher, divided between the principal and the two assistant principals, with feedback based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. They provide timely, effective feedback that is aligned to teachers' professional goals with clear recommendations, thus promoting teacher effectiveness. Student work produced during lessons observed is referred to in written observation reports, and referenced in notes by school leaders along with supports and suggestions. Professional development at the beginning of the school year focused on norming activities for teachers and administrators to align understanding as to the expectations of the levels and competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teachers. In addition, the ELA and math coaches, mentor teachers, and teacher team collaborations, support new teachers. Additionally, highly effective teachers are provided with opportunities to lead the grades as Instructional Leads. For example, the lead teacher in the second grade has demonstrated proficiency in improving student performance of ELLs and was made the Instructional Lead to provide support and guidance during teacher team meetings, resulting in professional growth.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen instructional practices so that lessons engage all learners and offer suitable challenge at their respective readiness levels. (1.2)
 - During visits to classrooms teacher practices reflect the school's beliefs about building student accountability and ownership. Lessons were organized according to the workshop model with mini-lessons that connect learning to previous concepts and engage students in active involvement, and turn-and-talk is frequently utilized in addition to independent activities and teacher modeling. Across the school, differentiation was noted in various forms including scaffolds such as word banks, tiered vocabulary, graphic organizers, pictures, sentence starters, different leveled and anchor texts to focus on text-based evidence in close reading, and center tasks aligned to individual

student goals. Rationales for grouping of students, and student-teacher conferencing were articulated by teachers verbally and in lesson plans. This however, is not the practice in every class; therefore, not all students receive the academic support necessary to accelerate their learning. Although students sit in groups, teachers do not always develop appropriately challenging tasks. As such, some students do not productively struggle with complex texts and some teachers do not yet implement lessons that allow for sufficient student engagement in higher order thinking. Consequently, some teachers miss out on demonstrating strategies to sufficiently engage students in higher order thinking so that all work products and activities are cognitively demanding of all learners, especially English language learners and those performing at the highest achievement levels.

- Teachers are beginning to employ open-ended questions to spark discussions and students in some classrooms are questioning each other's assumptions and ideas. For example, during a second grade literacy lesson the teacher continually asked probing questions and students shared varied strategies, paraphrased responses, and questioned each other. However, in some classrooms, questions and answers remain between teacher and individual student. Consequently, thought-provoking questions leading to conversations that give students the chance to support their views with evidence, change their minds, and use questions as a way to further learning, are not yet the norm across classes and grades. This results in uneven levels of student thinking, as noted in student work products and as evidenced by limited participation of students in discussions across classrooms.
- Expand the process of refinement of Common Core aligned curricula across all grades and subject areas, in order to emphasize rigorous tasks to prepare students for the next level. (1.1)
 - Although the majority of teachers use a plethora of student data to plan and refine curricula, set instructional goals and emphasize higher order skills, the learning tasks and activities are not consistently rigorous enough to challenge students performing at varied ability levels. Teachers integrate Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts into math and English language arts units of study. However, these practices are not yet evident across all grades and subjects. For example, during classroom visits, some lessons required only minimal thinking by students and little opportunity for them to explain their thinking, allowing most students to be compliant but not cognitively engaged in rigorous tasks that invite them to think critically. Teachers incorporate questioning techniques during their lessons, but the questions did not promote the depth and rigor needed to facilitate student learning for the various sub-groups. This is a work in progress and teacher teams continue to make further adjustment in order to ensure that the demands of the standards are embedded across all disciplines. Additionally, English language learners and students with disabilities are not consistently provided with grade level tasks to challenge them and some independent tasks are not well aligned to the teaching point, thus precluding students from broadening their knowledge base.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: The Family 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