



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Grant Avenue

Elementary School 449

**250 East 164th Street
Bronx, NY 10456**

Principal: Kristin Erat

Dates of review: March 6 - 7, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grant Avenue is an elementary school with 439 students from kindergarten through grade 4. The school population comprises 43% Black, 54% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 79% English language learners and 40% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. 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 develops a cohesive and highly supportive culture that promotes the academic and personal growth of students. (1.4)
 - Staff, students, and parents, work together to support a positive learning environment. Programs such as the 4R's emphasize respect, writing, reading and diversity. These are communicated to all members in a variety of ways, including a Counselor's Newsletter to promote Respect For All. Students are trained as Peace Makers and take a lead as role models and they train other peers on conflict resolution strategies and peer-mediations skills. Students also make flowers and write about acts of kindness for their Garden of Kindness to promote the school's values and goals. Assemblies provide opportunities for students to support one another in their learning and "touch base" with staff members to communicate their concerns on topics such as bullying, anti-drug campaigns, positive school behavior workshops, goal setting and middle school requirements. Students say they appreciate the fact that their views are heard and that there are many adults that can help them with academic and personal concerns. "Teachers care about us and talk to us". Morningside is also a key partner that emphasizes the school's core values, which are explicitly taught on a weekly basis, and align with the school's vision to educate the whole child. Counselors have regular meetings with administration, teachers, and parents, to monitor student's academic goals and behaviors to make sure that students' needs are properly met. This culture sets a collaborative and inclusive tone that encourages and motivates students to focus on achievement and has led to improvements in attendance from 90% to 92% and increased parent participation through their monthly parent school visits. Additionally, learning habits and skills that support academic readiness and resilience are enhanced through these partnerships and evident in classrooms.
- Teachers thoughtfully analyze student work and make instructional adjustments that improve student learning across the grades. (2.2)
 - Teachers create assessments and common rubrics in literacy based on data analysis from the State and unit assessments, and student work that is analyzed regularly by grade teams. These assessments are well aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and provide teachers with a clear picture of strengths and areas for improvement for individual students and cohorts. These gaps are targeted during small group instruction and student conferencing across the school. During grade meetings, teachers review student work and develop targeted instructional plans for individual students that are tracked and reviewed by teacher teams and shared with administration. Additionally, teachers develop action plans that target specific grade level patterns and writing traits such as focus and conclusion. During grade meetings, teacher teams develop action plans which identify strengths, struggles, and strategies for improvement that inform interventions, curricular adjustments, and task refinement. In one of the classrooms, students with Individualized Education Plans engaged in meaningful writing tasks that provided targeted scaffolds and tools to

develop writing skills identified during grade meetings. Students used paragraph frames with sentence starters. As a result of this robust process, there is significant improvement and growth in students' writing based on the informational writing pieces that were evident in classrooms and grade level profiles that capture growth based on writing traits.

- The leadership is committed to teacher development resulting in improved teaching practices that promote instructional coherence and teacher self-reflection. (4.1)
 - The principal communicates high standards, and in partnership with the assistant principal, has provided extensive teacher training on the Danielson Framework over the past three years. This school, previously one of the pilot schools, has used it training to set benchmarks and expectations for teaching and learning, as evident in the feedback reviewed and teacher comments. This was especially noted in the feedback in math, which was enhanced this year, based on data analysis done by the school's leadership team. Teaching practices in mathematics reflect improved checks for understanding during lessons and small group instruction to better meet student needs. Administration provides teachers with extensive strategies for improvement in data analysis needed for planning, goal setting, and monitoring student learning across content areas. New teachers benefit from support from mentors, peers, consultants and instructional leads. Professional development is strategically aligned to support teachers' goals and is customized to meet individual needs. Teachers collaboratively adjust their goals and teaching practices based on targeted feedback from administration that aligns to the Danielson Framework, and opportunities for meaningful dialogue between staff and administrators promotes coherence of instructional practices, professional development, assessment practices and reflection. Thus, teachers across the school state that this process is an effective way to refine their practices.
- The school provides various opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful collaborations that strengthen their instructional capacity. (4.2)
 - Teachers across the school engage in thoughtful professional collaborations that strengthen teaching practices to meet the varied needs of students across the school. The inquiry process guides the work of teacher teams whose focus is to use the CCLS to make instructional adjustments that strengthen student learning. One of the many strengths of the teams is their shared norms and protocols that enhance communication across the school and deepen staff's content knowledge and pedagogical skills. For example, teachers have developed student-friendly checklists in writing that guide students to effectively self-assess with peers and promote discussion. This has led to authentic collaborations and shared practices that build trust and improve student learning, based on student work and data profiles shared during grade and administrative meetings.
 - The school fosters a culture that values all members and sets up structures that encourage members of the team to participate and contribute effectively. For example, there are teacher leaders in the school that support their peers in literacy and math, and participate in training opportunities outside of the school. This information is shared with the rest

of the staff and provides a venue for teachers to share best practices around task development and supports for students at risk. As a result, new teachers are empowered to develop tools, charts, rubrics, and checklists for writing and math that are shared across the grades. These tools are shared during team meetings and are used to improve student learning. Consequently, teachers of all levels of experience develop and refine leadership skills that collectively bolster the instructional capacity of the school and influence key decisions around school initiatives and professional development.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop academic tasks that align to the CCLS and consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills across the grades for all students. (1.1)
 - The school has done a lot of work in aligning the curriculum to the CCLS by integrating the instructional shifts, thus promoting greater coherence of instruction. Extensive supports are evident in lesson plans and units to target key standards and skills that build fluency in literacy and math. Teachers developed a lesson plan template that aligns to the CCLS and the Danielson Framework and is used consistently throughout the school. Teachers indicate that this template has been a helpful tool to refine their planning and identify practices that support English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). Currently, the school is using the Go Math program and makes adjustments to meet individual needs by using various components from the program. However, academic tasks do not always provide meaningful opportunities for all students to expand critical thinking skills across the grades and subjects, resulting in uneven levels of cognitive engagement across the content areas. This lack of consistency limits the school's ability to make the same level of progress in math as in literacy.
- Further develop teaching practices that emphasize the instructional shifts to deepen student learning and improve student outcomes for all. (1.2)
 - Teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs that is supported by the school's vision to support students through a workshop model that is well aligned to the Danielson Framework. Teachers use a CCLS template for lesson planning that guides teaching practices and incorporates questioning prompts to facilitate discussions across content areas. Many teachers ask students to explain their thinking and say more about strategies they use during lessons. Teachers have created charts, checklists, and rubrics, to guide discussions, and extensive work is evident in reading and writing across grades with high levels of student ownership. Furthermore, small group instruction is evident across classrooms to support students. However, strategic use of teaching points does not consistently provide high levels of supports and extensions that are transferred in student work samples across content areas. Consequently, students miss out on developing a deep conceptual understanding and problem solving skills within the major work of the grades in areas such as Number and Operations, Algebraic Thinking and Measurement and Data. Therefore, there is a not yet sufficient opportunity for students to make meaningful connections that improves student outcomes and promotes inquiry.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Grant Avenue 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