Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

New Dorp

Elementary School R041

216 Clawson Street
Staten Island
NY 10306

Principal: Elise Feldman

Date of review: May 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: David Raubvogel

The School Context

New Dorp is an elementary school with 706 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 29% Hispanic, 60% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.5%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
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	**Additional Findings**	**Well Developed**
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	**Additional Findings**	**Well Developed**
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	**Celebration**	**Well Developed**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	**Focus**	**Well Developed**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**Area of:**	**Rating:**
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	**Additional Findings**	**Well Developed**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
The vast majority of teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teacher practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment.

Impact
Actionable and meaningful feedback provides teachers and students with an understanding of their academic achievement. Teachers make effective instructional adjustments to meet the student learning needs and provide them with an awareness of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the GO Math! and Teachers College (TC) Reading and Writing baseline assessments to monitor students' progress towards targeted learning objectives. In addition, teachers have modified the TC Reading and Writing curriculum with additional formative and summative assessments such as a pre and post on demand writing assessments for each unit. In mathematics, teachers conduct a variety of skill assessments at various points in the year, including: pre and post unit, mid-year, end of year, and daily quick-checks. In addition, teachers administer the Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment five times per year to gauge student growth in reading levels.

- Assessments are created collaboratively during teacher team meetings, and administered across grade levels and content areas. Teachers use a rubric to assess the rigor in student work and alignment to standards. English language arts (ELA) and math teachers administer and use data from pre-assessments to work with students to create individual goals aligned to key skills identified in the instructional units. During a team meeting, teachers articulated the importance of using rubrics accompanied by specific actionable feedback in informing instructional strategies needed to improve student outcomes. During the student meeting, two students spoke about how they use rubrics in class and when working on special projects. Both students had the rubric checklists in their notebooks.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms visited, teachers used a variety of checks for understanding such as turn and talk and exit slips to target and support areas of concern in students' academic skills. In math, students self-assess using yellow/green/red cards. It was also evident that teachers use conference notes to monitor student comprehension and meet their needs. In classrooms visited, teachers use the same rubric to assess student understanding in grades two to five.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
A culture for learning exists which consistently support high expectations among most staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to partner with families.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability and family partnerships results in the vast majority of staff and parents taking ownership for school-wide expectations yet is in the process of reaching all constituents as effectively.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the year, school leaders discuss expectations and goals for the year, observation options, and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) during the initial planning and end of year conferences with teachers. Teachers have multiple opportunities for professional development on supporting student independence. The principal continues to communicate high expectations to staff daily through the *Tiger News* and includes a daily or weekly instructional focus. There is also a weekly staff newsletter. A review of the school's professional development plan indicated that each month the staff partakes in a professional development activity around a professional article that supports one of the school's instructional foci. More opportunities to provide teacher-to-teacher professional learning to support the instructional focus continue to be a goal for the school administration.

- Department leaders and the administration collaboratively created a detailed faculty handbook, which clearly outlines all staff professional responsibilities and expectations. At the beginning of the year, all staff is given the handbook. School-wide documents indicate they regularly review it throughout the school year.

- Parents reported that they are consistently receiving information regarding their children's academic progress and that the school offers multiple opportunities for families to communicate with their teachers. Examples include the Parent Handbook, *School Messenger*, and emails. Parents can also take part in "Chat with the Principal," in an open monthly meeting. Teachers used the parent-teacher conferences in September to explain to parents what students will be learning at each grade for the current school year and in May, what they will be learning the following year.

- The school calendar shows monthly events for parents and families to engage in learning opportunities. A series of parent workshops are offered to support their understanding of the school's expectations, and students' academic growth. Parents reported that the workshops have been extremely helpful in understanding the framework used by teachers in their classrooms to engage students in learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in the school's curricula and academic tasks, embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Curricular and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data for individual and groups of students.

Impact

Rigorous tasks and access for all subgroups result in students' ability to demonstrate their high levels of thinking and cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps, pacing calendars and unit plans reviewed across content areas, provide evidence of alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and emphasize rigorous tasks aligned to the Depth of Knowledge tool (DOK). For example, in a grade four mathematics unit on decimal relationships, students are required to select appropriate computational and operational methods to solve problems. The unit plan included teaching points and a list of math strategies to support all learners. In a grade five ELA unit entitled, *Applying Analytical Lenses Across Literature and Informational Texts*, students are expected to become independent thinkers who can analyze diverse perspectives and draw on additional strategies. These strategies include using what they know about the structure of informational texts to understand and extract important information, stressing reading not just for facts, but additionally, for main ideas and the author's purpose.

- Teachers reported that they design units to increase text and task complexity using the DOK tool while increasing vocabulary and content area knowledge so that students are able to complete tasks that require greater depth of critical thought. In addition, teachers stated these curricular units engage students in creative, rigorous, and reflective inquiry by incorporating questioning, problem solving, reflection, and real-world connections across grades and content areas. Teacher document revisions to TC Reading and Writing and GO Math! program in binders as part of their curriculum mapping process during grade and content meetings. During a team meeting, teachers used their knowledge of students' preferred learning styles as well as samples of recent student work to modify a literacy unit by grouping students and ensuring leveled texts would be available. In addition, the principal provided examples of units in math and science that also implemented modifications based on student work and assessment data. A review of a grade four math unit focusing on decimals revealed adjustments to re-teach estimation strategies.

- A fourth grade teacher reported that, "Revisions to the curricula are an ongoing work-in-progress. The first thing we discovered is that we teachers were talking a lot…the children were not talking because the material is very scripted. We now use the *TC Reading and Writing curriculum* to support our lessons because *ReadyGEN* doesn't necessarily support ELLs and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The anchor texts are above the levels of some students, which are done intentionally for rigor."

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
A coherent set of beliefs on how students learn best is reflected in teaching practices, aligned to the curricula, the Danielson Framework for Teaching and school-level discussions. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Impact
Instructional coherence and high-level thinking result in the ability for all learners to demonstrate critical thinking and take an active role in elevating student work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers believe in student-centered instruction and student accountability in support of their own learning and behavior. A pedagogical shift toward increased effective practices that focus on strengthening reading and writing instruction to foster student independence is a team initiative across the school and is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers stated there is an emphasis on improving the quality of questioning and discussion techniques.

- There is a school-wide visible focus on student engagement, and accountable talk using targeted questioning and discussion techniques. In a fifth grade ELA class, students were engaged in a Socratic seminar about a short story titled, *Visiting*, where they debated the question, "Do you think Lonnie has truly adjusted to Miss Edna's house?" The question was student-developed. The inner circle engaged in a student-led discussion and debate using accountable talk stems such as "I agree with or I disagree with." Students in the outer circle listened and captured their peer's responses on a graphic organizer with columns headed, "What I See and Hear, Implications for our Work." In a grade four math lesson, students were grouped by levels determined by the prior assessment and participated in a task entitled, *Forming Relay Teams*. They were asked to group runners together to form four teams that were evenly matched and estimate their times

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, work products reflected the application of skills such as analysis of text, synthesis of important facts, and formulation of central ideas while working in groups to complete a task. In a fifth grade social studies class, students were grouped and were completing a project entitled, *Exploring Canada*, where they each explored a different aspect of the country, such as food and dress. First, students were asked to engage in a close reading and annotation of a text. Student-led groups had choices based on their topic of interest. Groups evaluated the information to determine its importance. Facts were grouped into the two categories, "rich facts" and "fluffy facts." Each group had to chart its answers and then share discussions with the class. Similar practices were embedded across grades and subject area classrooms.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
Teachers have built a culture of inquiry-based, professional collaboration, sharing insights relative to the coherence of pedagogy and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Effective distributed leadership is embedded where teachers have an integral role in decision-making.

Impact
School-wide teaching and learning decisions made by teachers result in instructional coherence throughout the vast majority of classrooms, and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts by working collaboratively during common planning periods and professional development sessions. Teachers plan their lessons using the Pearson Education's Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) and the Danielson Framework for Teaching to develop a common language and a shared set of practices across grades and subject areas, to determine next steps, and create scaffolds for whole class, small groups, and individualized instruction. Currently, all teacher teams engage in inquiry work. , This year he school shifted their focus from the revision of their inquiry structures to reviewing and studying student work and assessment data. During a team meeting, teachers reviewed student writing samples from a third grade ELA class, using a TC writing rubric. At the beginning of a team meeting, teachers engaged in examining student work using a TC writing rubric. This work was informed by the results from their last assessment data. Teachers discussed the writing samples and elicited strengths and struggles noticed on the samples.

- Teachers regularly engage in professional collaborations. A teacher said, "We have a strong culture of collaboration at our school. Our school is celebrated as a team." A review of teacher team meeting minutes showed that during weekly professional learning time and scheduled content area meetings, teachers engage in analyzing student work, aligning lessons and units with grade level cohorts, sharing instructional practices and align all instructional tasks with the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.

- Teacher leaders and peer instructional coaches, who represent each grade and content, meet weekly with the instructional cabinet to discuss professional development and teacher practice. The school administration and staff plan collaboratively and facilitate professional development, school-learning walks, articulation events, parent-teacher workshops, and all other school-wide events. During two observed teacher team meetings, teachers articulated that they feel empowered to have input on decisions toward the development of instructional resources across grades. Teachers reported that the instructional leads watch over the inquiry work and support their colleagues with inter-visitations, sharing of best practices and opening up their own rooms as they share how they collect data, instructional models for co-teaching, close reading, classroom management, and the implementation of the units of study. The instructional lead teachers lead discussions regarding the delivery of instruction. These designated teachers are the core of the school's Professional Development Committee, which facilitates school-wide and small group professional learning communities as evident by teacher schedules and the school's professional development plan.