Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review
Report

2013-2014

Kathryn Phelan

Elementary School Q011

54-25 Skillman Avenue
Queens
NY 11377

Principal: Anna Efkarpides

Dates of review: January 28-29, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Kathryn Phelan School is an elementary school with 1337 students from kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 1% Black, 50% Hispanic, 10% White, and 39% Asian students. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 13% 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 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Professional collaborations are a high priority and teachers profit from researching effective instructional techniques that ensure student progress. (4.2)

    o Every teacher is on a team that engages in collaborative inquiry work, meticulously monitors students' outcomes and evaluates the effectiveness of teaching practices. The work aligns to the school's overall goal to have students understand opinion and comprehend factual details, and to provide textual evidence in their writing. Teams embed the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in each unit of study across grades and subjects thereby strengthening instructional coherence across the school. For example, the third grade team analyzed the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) baseline data which indicated a range of abilities in stating an opinion, writing complete sentences and comprehending complex text. Third grade teachers noticed that high performing readers and writers struggle to support their beliefs using both of the articles provided. Lower performing students had difficulty decoding and comprehending the reading passages. Based on their findings, the teachers amended their instructional practices and provide learning experiences to strengthen students' ability to compare and contrast details from two sources. Throughout the fictional units, students sorted details using graphic organizers such as T-charts and Venn diagrams to show similarities and differences between characters, problems and solutions. Students completed a quick write assessment requiring them to read two articles in order to develop an informational essay comparing and contrasting the two reading passages. As a result, 85% of students in grades 1 through 6 demonstrated growth in sentence structure, an increase in the length of writing and improved the use of supporting details to provide reasons for their beliefs.

    o School administrators encourage teachers to take lead roles in facilitating committees. All grades are headed by grade leaders. The grade leaders meet with the principal once a month to discuss grade concerns and needs. The information is then shared with the grades during their common prep or working lunch. In addition, the principal supports teachers that have aspirations of becoming supervisors by having them work with the cluster teachers, special education teachers and English as second language (ESL) teachers. The aspiring leader facilitates study groups once a month. As a result, these teachers receive training to support teacher teams in learning through professional texts, looking at teacher and student work, and creating professional learning communities focused on increasing student achievement. Teacher teams contribute to decisions pertaining to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) performance tasks as noted in the unit of study and common assessments designed by the school. Consequently, teachers clearly state that they are invested in their work and enjoy their leadership roles which contribute to student learning across the school. Therefore, 90% of the students in grades K through 6 improved in comprehension and

response to literature as noted in the positive results of post-assessment CCLS performance tasks.

- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and benefit from the effective level of support they receive for their personal and academic development. (1.4)

  o The school's most recent learning environment survey indicated a need to improve safety. The safety committee, supporting the school goal related to safety, created a theory of action and plan with procedures incorporating lessons from the "Building Good Character and Stand Up! Speak Out!" program. Weekly lessons are implemented with lessons focusing on respect, kindness, self-esteem and anti-bullying. In addition, a reporting process for bullying and harassment is in place. For example, a student may file an anonymous complaint which is placed in an anti-bullying mailbox, proving them with a safe forum to voice their concerns. The administration and guidance counselors meet with the students that are alleged to be engaging in bullying. Certificates of behavior are presented to classes who exhibit good behavior in the lunchrooms. The principal's bulletin board displays names of students every month who receive recognition certificates for a variety of criteria. An anti-bullying program designed to help students recognize dangers associated with bullying and cyber bullying is also implemented through assembly programs and guest speakers. The program addresses topics such as how to identify a bullying situation, how to react and prevent such behavior, and what consequences are involved. The students take a survey to determine their needs and concerns. These resources are aimed at demonstrating that bullying, whether physical, verbal, or social, can be as harmful for those that bully as it is for those who are targeted. A lesson plan and supplemental activities assist educators in successfully instructing students on preventative measures related to bullying as well as to develop effective communication strategies. A student stated, "You can write a note and put it in the bullying mailbox and the principal helps you." Consequently, parents and staff state that these programs create an atmosphere where good character is modeled and rewarded. As a result, there is a significant decrease in the number of reports in the anti-bullying box from approximately 60 last year to 10 this year.

  o The attendance team consists of the supervising school aide, school aide, attendance teacher, principal, assistant principals, pupil accounting secretary and attendance secretary. The team meets weekly and coordinates outreach and supports that align with the needs of families and students. The team noticed that the absences and lateness of English language learners (ELLs) were increasing. Teachers now provide incentives and praise these students when they are present in school. Teachers call home and request parent meetings with the administration to improve attendance. A translator is provided when needed to support the families. In addition, the attendance teacher and administrator visit homes.   As a result, by focusing on the needs and interests of these and other students, there has been an overall increase in attendance from 95.4% to 96.2%.

- Leaders make effective, strategic organizational decisions that align with school instructional goals and support efforts that improve student learning. (1.3)

    o School leaders conducted a thorough analysis of student learning and outcomes that revealed gaps in progress and implemented additional supports to improve their learning. For example, they purchased the Imagine Learning online program to assess students' language proficiency and place them in groups. Lessons in the program individualize instruction and activities to build oral language and academic vocabulary. In addition, this program is used in the Title III after school classes. As a result, benchmark assessments reflect an increase of 25% in student progress. The school also purchased the program, On Our Way to English to support English language learners. This focuses more on oral language and targets beginners. The program includes charts, activity cards and controlled vocabulary which scaffolds the needed to become successful learners.   As a result, 80% of beginners met listening and speaking benchmarks as measured by an English as a second language (ESL) formative assessment.

    o Strategic scheduling ensures teachers are able to meet a minimum of twice weekly in professional groups across grades and vertically to collaborate in inquiry and instructional planning. During these meetings, teachers use protocols to examine student work, identify gaps in learning and adjust curriculum and instruction. Teacher grade leaders meet with the administrative team ensuring that inquiry work is consistent and instructional practice is constant across the school. The teams work to develop and refine curricula and create appropriate tasks that include access points for high needs students.   For example, teams looked at vocabulary assessments and incorporated strategies to align with various learning styles.   For example, teachers work on the use of blocking, chunking, context clues and the use of visual clues reading. In addition, to improve vocabulary skills, students create vocabulary booklets and play vocabulary games such as What's the Word and the use of Story Town vocabulary websites. IPads ensure all students have a valid entry point into understanding vocabulary. Also, teacher's state students are more confident in approaching unfamiliar words and using new vocabulary with different subject matter As a result, benchmark assessments and unit tests reflect a 35% increase in the percentage of students performing at or above grade level.

- School leaders set clear focused goals and effectively communicate the school's improvement efforts resulting in a shared commitment to promote student learning. (3.1)

    o The school monitors and revises Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals at School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings, collaborative inquiry sessions, grade conferences and faculty conferences to ensure students' academic and personal growth. The school's goal to foster social emotional growth is reinforced through a cultural exchange.   Twice a year, each class in grades 4 through 6 embark in a cultural exchange protocol where pairs of students interview each other and discuss their cultural differences.   Teachers state that some of the results have been amazing in bringing children together. Students realize that the

differences they see on the surface are actually similarities that they have discussed in class. The schools CEP goals are also closely linked to accelerate student learning. For example, part of the schools CEP goals is to improve performance in English language arts and math for special education students. The special education inquiry team, together with the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team and special education supervisor came up with a plan of action. While sharing best practices, the special education team noticed that students were having difficulties identifying fractions. Based on the IReady math assessment, only 10% of the students performed on grade level. As a result, the team developed strategies and activities to help students master key concepts. For example, students worked in small groups and created interactive trifold chart displays to identify the three types of fraction (fraction, mixed number, improper fraction). Theses foldable displays included visual and numerical examples along with written definitions. Students were also guided to create each type of fraction using the Virtual Manipulatives application on their IPADs. This resulted in 30% more students' demonstrating growth on the IReady post assessments.

o   The mission and vision of the school is at the center of the instructional planning. Evidence of integrating the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into the school's curricula including the Citywide Instructional Expectations and instructional shifts are noted in the artifacts that support curriculum plans and learning activities. According to one the CEP goals, by January 2014, 50% of the students will increase one or more instructional reading level as measured by the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark assessment system. According to the diagnostic and State assessments, the school needs to increase the number of students making progress in ELA. Diagnostic testing from Fountas and Pinnell served a means of mediating learning and making assessment continuous. Through diagnostic testing, teachers determined student proficiency and are in the process of addressing individual deficiencies. The administration provided   monthly staff development in using the intervention program provided by the Trophies and Storytown programs for paraprofessionals regarding intervention strategies for working one on one and with small groups of students. The school also provided workshops on scaffolding, Depths of Knowledge (DOK), critical thinking and Response to Intervention (RtI), during common preps and inquiry sessions.   In addition, instruction on the use of strategies to increase ELA performance aligned to the CCLS supports staff. In addition, educational assistants and support staff receive training on small group instruction to close students learning gaps. As a result, 50% more students met the mid-year goal as measured by the Fountas & Pinnell assessment and improved teacher practice as indicated in the Advance data specific to the Danielson framework Domains 2 and 3 that measure the classroom learning environment and instructional practices.

What the school needs to improve

•   Strengthen teacher assessment practices to reflect effective feedback in order to make instructional adjustments and provide clear next learning steps to improve student outcomes. (2.2)

- Teachers celebrate students' best efforts through checkmarks and written comments and use this information to inform instruction. However, not all student work includes feedback in the form of next steps for improvement. As a result, teachers are not fully able to consistently provide students with their next learning steps, thus limiting progress. Teacher teams and individual teachers use running records, and curricular aligned end of unit assessments to supplement summative data and identify student performance levels. However, the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment within instructional periods to make immediate adjustments to lessons is not a fully embedded practice across the school. This limits teachers' ability to pinpoint and address the special needs of student subgroups and modify targeted interventions to accelerate learning. Consequently, instructional strategies and learning tasks are not always strategically revised, hindering opportunities to meet the needs of all students.

- Refine the use of strategic teaching strategies that embed multiple entry points in the curricula for all learners, including relevant subgroups that result in producing meaningful work products. (1.2)

  - Teachers plan lessons and use scaffolds to provide multiple entry points into instruction in response to student's needs and interests, including special education students. The use of word walls across classrooms helps all students build their vocabulary. Also, the school focuses on supporting English language learners (ELLs) by hiring dually certified teachers who have both Common Branch and English as a second language (ESL) licenses. However, lessons do not always challenge all students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, in that assignments do not include varied opportunities for them to engage in higher order thinking tasks or demonstrate ownership of their learning, thus limiting even greater participation and learning outcomes.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Kathryn Phelan Q011	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly…	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

To what extent does the school …	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

To what extent does the school …	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