Quality Review Report
2014-2015

The William Sidney Mount
School Designation Q174
65-10 Dieterle Crescent
Rego Park
NY 11374

Principal: Karin Kelly
Date of review: February 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson
### The School Context

William Sidney Mount School is an elementary school with 676 students from grade Prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 5% Black, 25% Hispanic, 35% White, and 35% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.5%.

### School Quality Criteria

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings
The school establishes high expectations for all constituent groups, including students, teachers, and families, through a variety of communication practices. The administration consistently conveys important information to staff via the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the use of professional learning teams.

Impact
There is mutual accountability for student success by all stakeholders. The high levels of professionalism, quality instruction, and effective communication around academic, social, and behavioral expectations for students result in improved student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence
- The principal communicates with staff weekly highlighting best practices, as well as checking in with staff regarding feedback, instructional expectations, and on-going professional development support. Through ADVANCE observations and formal and informal communication, administration shares specific feedback on the expectations for teacher practices in all classrooms. Monday afternoon sessions are based on the areas of growth identified by observation reports and the needs of teachers. In addition, through intervisitations teachers are told the high leverage areas to focus on to change student outcomes like incorporating more hands on activities and student to student discussions during class activities. For example, the school is focused on teachers facilitating and managing groups; plan differentiated lessons based on learning styles, and provide feedback to students during the instructional process.

- There are monthly “Parents as Learning Partner Sessions” along with end of unit celebrations that encourage parents to participate in instructional practice and student learning activities aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Parents receive newsletters, translated into appropriate languages, as well as periodic progress in subject areas highlighting student progress within units of study. They attend monthly workshops and have access to assessment data allowing parents to be active participants in their child’s learning.

- Through use of rubrics and teacher and peer feedback systems, students are able to clearly articulate the skills, strategies and standards they are learning and what they need to do in order to improve their work products. This was evident during the student meeting where students in all grade levels consistently defined expectations that were communicated to them around writing units and stated next steps, such as, why they need to demonstrate thinking in math tasks and how to connect their work to real world concepts.
Findings
All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Higher-order thinking skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across most grades and content areas.

Impact
As a result of these findings, the school attempts to ensure that the instructional shifts are woven throughout curriculum maps, units of studies and lesson plans addressing priority standards in core subject areas integrated with Science and Social Studies. In addition, rigorous and challenging academic tasks are incorporated into lessons where students have opportunities to demonstrate their thinking and understanding.

Supporting Evidence
- Curriculum tasks and lesson plans include text dependent questions and students must cite their evidence to prove their thinking and support their answers, however in a few classes, the lesson plans did not demonstrate a clear plan to support their various learners, including students performing at or above grade level.

- Lessons include teacher created materials and other resources to provide support to students in learning the content, as well as skills and strategies that encourage higher order thinking such as synthesizing two texts, comparing and contrasting texts, and making inferences.

- Teacher teams revamped the curriculum to address gaps and look at tools from a vertical viewpoint. Curriculum units have been updated to find gaps across grades and find out material that is repetitive and or addressed across consecutive grades. In an English language arts map, which was infused with science content incorporated the use of trade books with scientific themes in reading and writing units.
Additional Findings

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The school has a coherent set of beliefs, which are shared between administration and teachers about how students learn best that are predicated on the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with instructional shifts. In addition, there is ample student-to-student thinking and dialogue based on evidence-based accountable talk across classes and subject areas.

Impact
As a result, instructional practices foster student thinking, participation, ownership of learning and students are able to produce meaningful real life work products across subject areas.

Supporting Evidence
• Across the vast majority of classrooms, teacher practices consistently reflect and support beliefs about how students learn best and are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula. For example, the school fosters beliefs in the team teaching model where students have access to increased collaboration among teachers using the workshop model to ensure students receive required supports.

• There are several opportunities during the class for students to engage in student-to-student conversations and discourse, either in partnerships or small groups. Students are able to articulate what they are working towards, why it is important, and help to identify the direction of the current and future lessons. In one science classroom, students utilized littleBits, a system of electronic modules that snap together with magnets to create a tool to be used in real life. Students formulated their hypothesis of what they wanted to create and through conversation determined the best course of action in designing their tools.

• Instructional outcomes and learning activities are created and devised using a standards-based curriculum and reflect beliefs about optimal student learning situations and are influenced by the priorities of the Danielson Framework and the prioritized shifts identified by the school community. For example, in one, third grade reading classroom, students were asked to become experts in reading a non-fiction text by digging deeper into the text using close reading strategies. Students were investigating about the culture of Peru and exploring the texts to ask and answer questions.

• Students, across classrooms, produce work and engage in discussions that reflect critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and problem solving, as well as student ownership of the learning process. In a general education 1st grade class, students were having conversations comparing and contrasting different characters in their stories. There were three different types of questions with increasing difficulty. Students had the choice of which group to work with along with the type of book they were working with.
Findings
The school aligns assessments to the curricula, and uses ongoing common assessments and grading practices to analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels.

Impact
As a result, across classrooms, students are presented with student friendly rubrics for each subject area and know the expectations of grade level appropriate work. In addition, curriculum teams have made ongoing adjustments to curriculum to address differences systematically within grades for both English language arts and mathematics using curricula materials.

Supporting Evidence
- Students are presented with rubrics and sample anchor papers for each level and have to decide the rubric score before being asked to complete tasks. Students are able to use checklists and rubrics to guide their work and know the criteria for quality work. However, in some classes, rubrics were introduced during or after the project or activity was completed.

- Teachers highlight strengths and areas of growth for each assignment as noted in student work folders, portfolios, and bulletin board displays throughout the school.

- Data-informed decision-making is highly valued at PS 174. All staff members are required to be cognizant of students’ performance levels in all subject areas, including but not limited to science, social studies, reading levels, math problem solving skills, etc. Systems are in place to capture information on a daily or weekly basis to inform teaching strategies, intervention or enrichment activities, as well as students who are considered on level.

- Teacher teams notice and analyze trends across grades on New York State exams for English language arts and mathematics, as well as their in house Teacher’s College Writing Reading Program assessments. However, the formative data results from running records and conference notes are analyzed inconsistently for the lower grades.
Findings
Teachers work effectively in collaborative teams within and across grades to share their practice, analyze data from common assessments, monitor student progress and make modifications to curriculum and are able to participate in school level decision-making.

Impact
These structured collaborations result in shared leadership structures and the implementation of curricular adjustments aimed at improving student learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher teams are currently visiting each other’s classrooms to observe practice. One teacher new to the school said she observed effective teaching practices and new ways to teach reading.

  Although teachers are clearly evaluating the impact of curriculum on student learning through analysis of assessment data and student work products, they have not yet engaged in inquiry around pedagogical decision-making and how their practice informs outcomes for all learners.

- Most teachers are able to articulate the instructional focus of increasing student engagement by continuing to expose students to discussions and learning activities that elicit their thinking and ultimately improve instruction. During one meeting, teachers were gathering and tracking data to identify skills that students displayed in their writing in the former grades in order to make decisions about what targets needed to be addressed at their current grade level.

- During the inquiry team meeting, teachers analyzed select students’ skill levels, identified practices that are working well and effectively targeted challenge areas, while recommending instructional approaches to colleagues around how to effectively support the needs of these learners when reading complex non-fiction text.