P.S. 071 Forest Elementary

1st Grade Student

"I use the rubrics to look at the traits and development levels so I know where I need to focus."

MISSION To love learning we need to engage the mind, body and soul.

VISION We believe our goal is to provide a solid educational foundation and a sense of community by engaging students in rich learning experiences. As a school, we strive each day to develop our students' knowledge, independence, confidence and character by building trust and encouraging meaningful relationships. We embrace learning by educating through many diverse curricula which evoke wonder and empower "the whole child". By continuing to build community among staff, students and families, Forest Elementary opens the pathway for a journey of life-long learning and a clear vision for the future.

AT A GLANCE

Founded
1906

Grades Served
K-5

Borough, District
Queens, 24

Neighborhood
Ridgewood

Total Students
949

Admissions Policy
Open

Co-located
No

Demographics
Asian 3.0%
Black 1.1%
Hispanic 56.0%
White 39.4%
Other .6%

Free or Reduced Price Lunch
82.2%

English Language Learners
13.7%

Special Education
13.2%

Attendance
93.2%

NYC Department of Education

Created in school year 2013-14

School-wide Leadership Philosophy

Forest Elementary's principal, Indiana Soto, joined the school in the 2013-14 school year. A significant component she brought to the school was her ability to inspire and motivate the staff, and positively affect the culture at the school. This has been in large part a result of the distributive leadership philosophy she holds. She believes that staff members should be involved in the decision-making process to promote collaboration, generate harmonious working relationships and strengthen teacher practice and ultimately student outcomes. School staff members have embraced the distributed leadership philosophy and incorporated it into their practice.

The principles of distributed leadership that focus on improving teaching and learning in a school system are below (Elmore, 2000):

- The purpose of leadership is to improve practice and performance.
- Improvement requires continuous learning, both by individuals and groups.
- Leaders lead by exemplifying the values and behavior they want others to adopt.
- People cooperate with one another in achieving their goals when they recognize other people's expertise.
- Leaders are responsible for helping to make possible what they are requiring others to do.

Building A New Structure for School Leadership (Elmore, 1999)

Teacher

"The work of the committee, and the approach to sharing the work school-wide has helped teachers understand the MoSL process."

Distributed Leadership in Practice

The distributed leadership model was initially used to support the work around implementation of Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) the student assessment component of the new requirements from New York State around teacher effectiveness. A committee was created and structured in order to provide the staff ownership of the MoSL process. The selected committee members were felt to represent the diversity of the current staff at P.S.071, and exemplified the values and behaviors that were desired from all staff members. There were teachers from upper and lower grades, different clusters, special education teachers and an administrator. The committee members are listed below:

Committee Member	Role
Ms. Sandra Vargas	Kindergarten/ESL
Ms. Lauren Levine	Special Education Coordinator
Ms. Michelle Rafalko	2nd Grade
Ms. Nichole Montecalvo	4th grade
Ms. Kristine Schuff	4th Grade
Ms. Robyn Rufrano	5th Grade
Ms. Nancy Wagner	Cluster/UFT Chapter Leader
Ms. Allison Napoli	Assistant Principal

The MoSL Committee took ownership of the work to increase teacher buy-in to adopting and implementing MoSL, in order to increase student learning.

The role of the MoSL Committee was expanded to include the following responsibilities:

- Develop and communicate rationales for MoSL selection decisions.
- Serve as a resource point for instructors to facilitate the implementation process.
- Norm and score MoSL baseline summative assessments for all grade levels.
- Adjust school curriculum in literacy and math to correlate with the performance-based assessments.
- Provide guidance in data analysis, reporting and best practices in instructional design using data.

The MoSL committee followed the city's recommended protocol for the MoSL selection process. The main concern when choosing the assessments was to ensure they would maximize the benefit of obtaining specific, targeted student data that would best illuminate the instructional needs of the students and measure their student learning. To make this decision the committee reviewed prior state assessment results, and analyzed the language in the assessment materials as well as the current organizational layout of the school faculty. Below is an outline of the decision-making process and sharing of information with the larger school community.

1) As an entire faculty, a data-analysis protocol (see below) was used to explore the ELA and Math scores of students in each grade. The resulting analysis was given to the MoSL committee to inform their decision about MoSL assessments.
2) The MoSL Committee reviewed the available materials and made the appropriate choice for their students and teachers.

1st Grade Student

"We get a smaller version of the poster on the wall to look at our work."

3) The committee participated in the Hopes and Fears protocol from School Reform Initiatives (see below) to identify potential areas of concerns on how teachers would take up the selections.
4) The committee developed student and teacher rationales for each of the decisions in order to share with the faculty.
5) Each member of the committee shared with their grade level the choice of MOSL assessments and the accompanying rationales.
6) The school had a structured, whole-faculty discussion on further supports that would help in the implementation of these assessments to best support student growth.

Data Analysis Protocol

Hopes and Fears Protocol

The staff decided to have the committee score all of the assessments in beginning of October and May. Staff felt that the committee was the most prepared for scoring and that it would increase consistency and execution. The MoSL specialist supported the norming around scoring of the assessments. After scoring was complete, the committee shared the results with grade appropriate teams.

The committee also started to make connections between the MOSL assessments and the current Common Core-aligned curriculum. Discussion around curriculum materials prompted connections of instructional practice with the performance-based MoSL assessments. Teachers saw the impact of using a common rubric and an additional team was created. This curriculum analysis team helped create informational and narrative writing rubrics for every grade. These team members were selected for participation because they attended curriculum training over the summer and were prepared to support the rubric development work. The rubrics were modeled after the MoSL rubrics. Every classroom teacher created rubric posters, student-work rubrics and a scoring sheet for all grade levels. Rubrics were modified for special needs and ELL students. For example, pictorial images were added to explain traits.

1st Grade Student Engaging With the Rubric

Student Writing Rubric Sample

1st Grade Opinion Rubric

1st Grade Opinion Checklist

3rd Grade Narrative Rubric

3rd Grade Narrative Checklist

5th Grade Informational Rubric

5th Grade Informational Checklist

This Curriculum Analysis Team is an example of the additional teacher teams that exist to further the work of the MoSL committee and aim to strengthen teacher practice and support students and their families. Additional teams that exist are the data analysis team, Quality Review team, Community Leadership team (CLT) and the School Leadership Team (SLT). All teams embraced the distributed leadership philosophy.

Impact

Student Growth

As a result of the shared practices and focus on writing across all classrooms, students are able to clearly understand and articulate the expectations of their work. They are active participants in their own growth through self and teacher assessments against the rubrics. Students also articulated that all teachers are there to support them and help keep them safe.

Teacher Practice

The work of the MoSL committee started off with a focus on helping teachers to understand and implement the expectations around assessments. The work of the committee then prompted grade level teams to work together to develop additional rubrics to help with consistency across classrooms. Seeing the impact on students having more consistency across classrooms generated the idea to provide grade level teams time to create tasks for the first six weeks of the 2014-15 school year. Grade teams were given two full days to work on task generation in the spring. The instructional coaches designed and guided the professional collaboration days, alongside the principal, with the accountability expectations as a framework. Each staff member was assigned a thought partner. The partnerships were aimed to complement staff members' styles of teaching and allow for productive struggle in the creation of the cognitively challenging tasks for students. The school's philosophy is that the development of teacher practice drives student learning. See below for sample tasks generated from the professional collaboration days.

2nd Grade ELA Tasks

5th Grade ELA Tasks

spotlight

Professional Collaboration Days

- Each grade provided with 2 full days to collaborate
- Tasks were created for the beginning of next school year
- Instructional coaches facilitated the collaboration sessions
- The work continued in the two weekly common instructional planning periods

Successes and Challenges

Successes

The distributed leadership model streamlined the MoSL implementation process, increased teacher buy-in and lessened the anxiety of teachers around MoSL. The work of the committee led to other structured work that increased consistency across the school. Students are benefiting from shared expectations across the school and have a shared language about their work in writing. The work also improved teacher understanding of the assessment and data analysis and application process. The collaborative culture of the school has also been strengthened.

Challenges

Teachers still hold some anxiety around MoSL and what it means for them in their classroom. The MoSL committee is aware of the anxiety and works with it accordingly. For example, in a meeting where the committee discussed the trends from the last assessment they also discussed the best time and way to disseminate the information. They discussed whether t was better to share the results with teachers before the summer break or to wait until the new school year. The committee wanted teachers to engage with the trends and plan for the year accordingly. The hesitation to share results with teachers immediately was that at that point of the year, teachers might not have time to engage deeply with the data. The final decision was to share the trends at the next all-faculty meeting, but with the clear message that more time will be spent in the fall digging into the specific data in order to inform instruction.

Thinking Forward

The MoSL committee will continue to support the work next year, with the same committee members as this year. In case there is a need to bring on a new member of the committee, a process is currently being developed to help select the right individual. Additional teams will continue to meet and work to increase consistency of practice across the school. One way this has begun is meeting to plan for next year based on the 2014-15 Citywide Instructional Expectations. P.S. 071 has outlined what they already have in place, what they need to refine and next steps to support professional collaboration, knowledge of students, and instructional focus. See below for their planning documents.

CIE Knowledge of Students

CIE Professional Collaboration

CIE Instructional Focus