

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The Williamsburg Early Childhood Centre

PS 319

**360 Keap Street
Brooklyn
NY 11211**

Principal: Aleyda Martinez

Dates of review: May 20-21, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Williamsburg Early Childhood Centre PS 319 is an early childhood school with 164 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 1. The school population comprises 2% Black, 95% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal effectively uses a research based teaching framework to support teacher development with targeted feedback to elevate pedagogy and student growth. (4.1)
 - The principal regularly provides teachers with actionable, instructional feedback that is guided by the Danielson's Framework for Teaching and the Citywide Instructional Expectations. The school continues to utilize the short feedback observation cycles for all teachers after last year's participation in the Talent Management Pilot Program for teacher effectiveness. Additionally, all teachers have participated in professional development aimed at acquiring a common understanding of the framework. Moreover, there is continuous effort in providing teachers with added professional support, especially in teacher questioning techniques and student generated questions and discussions. Teachers say that they receive professional support addressing their needs and are regularly scheduled for school-based inter-visitations to share best practices as evidenced by the school calendar and feedback from inter-visitations. For example, visits to other teachers' classrooms specifically target teaching higher order skills and student engagement in discussions while including a protocol for teacher observation note-taking aligned to the teaching framework. Frequent cycles of informal classroom observations are scheduled monthly and all teachers were observed formally this year. The principal provides specific and immediately applicable feedback, especially in the area of student engagement. For example, in observation reports reviewed, the feedback specifically commended teachers for prompting students to pose their own questions. Furthermore, the support Network assists the principal in providing all teachers with meaningful staff development around teaching competencies and opportunities to participate in workshops, such as one on the implementation of strategies of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), thus strengthening engaging students in learning. As a result, teachers use meaningful feedback and individual professional development as well as student work data to improve their instructional strategies to meet student needs.
 - A review of formal and informal classroom observation reports reveals that the principal uses the Danielson's rubric and adheres to the school specific areas of professional development. For example, informal reports capture evidence and strengths, such as asking a variety of high order questions or providing multiple entry points through daily programmed learning centers. At the same time, teachers receive clearly outlined next steps. Additionally, the principal follows up with her focused observations to monitor teacher and student growth and offer on-going support in her consistent classroom visits. As a result, regular school-wide teacher development is improving student engagement as evidenced by a "turn and talk" instructional strategy implemented across grade levels.

- The school aligns its resources with school goals and structures purposeful schedules, resulting in continuous support for professional collaboration and improvement of instruction. (1.3)
 - The school's vision is to support all students in academic success through increasing academic rigor and providing enrichment experiences. Despite limitations of the budget, the principal schedules a 4-day-a week, school-based, extended day program from late September to March, in order to give almost 100 enrolled Kindergarten and Grade 1 students an opportunity to learn Italian, participate in yoga classes and receive reinforcements in reading and writing. Grade 1 students are also strategically placed in the morning tutorial to receive academic supports in literacy and math. Moreover, in response to assuring academic rigor, the funds were scheduled to purchase a new, standards-based, math program, *Think Math*. The school also has several partnerships that enhance student learning. For example, collaboration with the Circus Arts Program through Marquis Studios, gives students a chance to engage in role-playing and physical activities that build self-confidence and improve fine motor skills. Similarly, a new partnership with Mighty Milers, sponsored by the New York Road Runners, facilitates prevention of child obesity. Consequently, self-esteem increases, thus helping the students attain higher academic achievement. Furthermore, programs like *Think Math* provide additional opportunities for teacher professional development to support their students in building problem solving strategies. These initiatives are increasing learning opportunities and supports to academic programs for all learners.
 - Teacher programs and student schedules are structured to provide time for grade level teams to meet and for teachers to visit each other to observe instruction or meet with a writing specialist. For example, the principal secured funds to hire substitute teachers whose schedules enable professional development and common planning opportunities for regular grade level teachers to review student work and design tasks that support the instructional goal of increasing students' critical thinking. The school realized that additional planning time was necessary and obtained a School Based Option (SBO) to allow for all teachers to meet every Thursday, in addition to weekly common planning time. Moreover, the principal allocates funds for after-school teacher curriculum planning in the Spring. Consequently, all grade level teachers have increased opportunities, leading to improvement of instruction and building professional capacity.
- Teacher teams integrate the Common Core Learning Standards into all content curricula across grade levels and use student work and assessment results to ensure student progress toward identified school goals.(4.2)
 - All teachers collaborate during the inquiry process in analyzing student work for alignment to the standards and to build leadership skills that increase student and teacher performance. Teachers of all grades are scheduled to meet with their colleagues, the Writing Specialist and the Response to Intervention (RTI) leader, at a minimum of twice a week to discuss planning of instructional units of study and to look at student achievement results. The integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and planning for multiple entry points are at the core of

teacher team meetings, in addition to monitoring student progress and the use of learning strategies in support of unit and school goals. For example, teachers compare the results of post-assessments from previous units to pre-assessment outcomes of current units and identify academic areas for growth and next instructional steps. They also plan for multiple entry points for identified students. For example, one team planned scaffolds for English language learners (ELL's) such as the use of pictorials or technology, application of sequential words or making connections and activating prior knowledge. Furthermore, teachers have leadership opportunities in scheduling inter-visitations and choosing professional articles to share with colleagues in support of teaching a current unit of study and strengthening teaching practice. Moreover, a vertical RTI team continuously probes student reading achievement through the use of the DIBELS program and reports the results to grade level teams. Teacher teams also outline next data-based instructional steps, such as strategy lessons or guided reading groups. As a result, teachers improve their instructional practices leading to increased student progress, especially in reading and writing, as evident in academic growth measured by running records in reading. This is evidenced in only 1% of first grade students who are now reading on A/B level as compared to 22% in September, thus showing steady improvement in literacy.

- Teachers articulate a belief on how students learn best and provide multiple entry points to ensure all students can participate in rigorous tasks with increased opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking. (1.2)
 - The school emphasizes questioning and discussion techniques, providing access to learning and on-going assessments to support best practices in how students learn best. The principal focuses her feedback on these teaching competencies. For example, all mini lessons and read aloud activities are utilized by teachers to ask students open-ended questions. Similarly, in all classes we visited we saw teachers engaging students in “turn and talk” and group work, thus providing on-going opportunities to discuss tasks and ask for clarification as they are guided by the attributes listed for effective teachers in the teacher development framework. Students are also grouped for learning, especially during learning center time, when teachers provide multiple access points to learning. As observed in most classes, students have opportunities to practice skills on the computer, using educational websites such as coolmath.com or starfall.com. Additionally, students and teachers use pictorials, graphic organizers, manipulatives and real life objects, thus consistently providing scaffolds for diverse learners to be able to access learning. As a result, all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities are engaged in rigorous tasks and have opportunities to demonstrate higher order skills, as evidenced in student work products in writing and math tasks from the Exemplars.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that curricula and units of study across content areas include strategically planned supports and extensions for all diverse learners, particularly high achievers, in order to increase extended learning.(1.1)

- The school has aligned curricula and lessons with the CCLS and the CIE as revealed by a review of curriculum artifacts and all grade level maps of instructional units of study in English language arts (ELA) and math. For example, a Kindergarten ELA map lists reading, writing, speaking and listening, language standards and reading foundation skills together with teaching points, assessments and essential questions. All maps include supports and extension strategies derived from the Universal Design for Learning (UDL), such as picture cues, small group instruction or skits and role play. Similarly, all math curriculum maps include the same components and add suggested literature and a read-aloud selection of books to support content. Supports and extension strategies for some targeted learners are embedded in all curriculum maps and most lesson plans across grades in efforts to close the achievement gap. For instance, in classes we visited teachers sometimes used learning centers or independent practice that would promote accessing learning for all, including English language learners. However, although plans reflect the use of UDL strategies to engage most learners, there are still gaps in how teachers accelerate student learning, especially of high achievers, thus limiting opportunities for this sub-group to expand their knowledge.
- Provide support to teachers in giving more specific feedback to students and inform instructional adjustments, in order to strengthen student mastery toward their next learning goals. (2.2)
 - Across grade levels teachers use common assessments such as pre-and post-unit tests for writing and math performance tasks and Fountas and Pinnell reading assessment. The school collects student achievement data from multiple assessments and grade level teachers receive student group data reports from the school's data specialist, who analyzes and presents student results from units of study and reading levels. Additionally, the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) team works with identified groups of students and regularly probes them using the Wilson Foundations and DIBELS Next Benchmark Assessment tools. For example, the RTI leader presents Tiers 1, 2 and 3 identified student profiles based on probing assessments to teacher teams that also engage in planning instructional strategies to move students towards benchmarks as observed in teacher team meetings. As a result, most teachers use student data to adjust lessons and set next instructional steps. Moreover, teachers across grade levels meet regularly with the RTI team leader and analyze trends in student performance, share gaps in meeting the standards, and plan strategies for academic support. For example, a team of 1st grade teachers identified groups of students for interventions in writing based on the gaps in meeting the standards of a "How to" unit and adjusted scaffolds for teaching vocabulary in student strategy groups. Even though these efforts are leading to the next instructional steps, individual feedback does not always include learning strategies for students to use in order to improve their academic performance. Similarly, the school uses standards-based writing and math rubrics, but specific teacher feedback to students is not consistent across classrooms. Thus, not providing all students with next steps and strategies to achieve grade level benchmarks.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Williamsburg Early Childhood Centre PS 319	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 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to 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 support 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 them?			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 students' 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 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			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