

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

PS/IS 323

Elementary – Middle School K323

**210 Chester Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Linda Harris

Dates of review: May 19-20, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Mauricière de Govia

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

PS/IS 323 is an elementary/middle school with 451 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 80% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has developed strategically aligned units of study with key standards and the citywide instructional expectations to ensure that all students are cognitively engaged in rigorous curricula and challenging tasks. (1.1)
 - The school adopted ReadyGEN for English language arts and GO Math! for math instruction for kindergarten through grade 5, Code X for English language arts and Connected Mathematics Project (CMP3) for math instruction for grades 6-8. The curriculum was chosen collaboratively by the principal, assistant principals, teachers, and parents. The latter group was given support materials in the form of parent pamphlets to help understand the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The principal stated, “Curriculum should consider the lives and experience of the students that are learning from it...it was very important for this school community to be aligned with the Citywide Instructional Expectations and the CCLS...incorporating Depth of Knowledge and Universal Learning Design as teachers attended professional development about embedding these elements into their plans.” Curriculum plans revealed that teachers consider the learning standards, student data, and the school-wide curriculum to design differentiated tasks and flexible student groups. Furthermore, plans account for adjustments to instruction based on student observations. For example, in a 5th grade special education English language arts lesson plan, the teacher accounts for what the small group versus pairs of students are doing with supporting graphic organizers that are aligned to student ability. Teaching plans also document specific attention to the instructional shifts embedded in the learning standards. Scaffolded approaches to building math fluency via multiplication games and drills were evident in 4th and 5th grade lesson plans. Furthermore, there was alignment in plans about the teaching of vocabulary instruction. Many teachers chose to pre-teach vocabulary with supports for in context learning. Students also have opportunities to engage physical education, the arts, and technology. Planning for the play *The Little Mermaid* showed evidence of CCLS alignment with the integration of literacy, speech, and the importance of characterization in the development of a story. As a result of this curricula selection and design, all students, including English language learners and special education students, have access to CCLS-aligned curricula that infuse the instructional shifts to engage students in higher order thinking across grades and subjects.
- Teachers’ instructional practices provide learners with multiple opportunities into the curricula so that all students can engage in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate high level thinking that produces meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - The principal stated, “students need choice, knowledgeable teachers...who are flexible, a variety of resources, and a classroom that allows them to apply themselves to challenges...working in groups, with rigor and difficulty that pushes them to learn.” Classroom visits portrayed this vision as students and teachers were engaged with each other via

discussions, tasks or assessments. It was evident that there were established routines as students when told or asked demonstrated the habitual expectations and time on task behaviors. For example, in a 3rd grade class, students were grouped by color: the red group, the green group, etc., and each group had different task cards. The red group had a close reading assignment, the green group had an extension assignment, and the yellow group had a character analysis assignment. The teacher worked with one group on reading and citing evidence from the text. This practice was also witness in a 5th grade class where the students were seated in groups with different graphic organizers, task cards, and supporting non-fiction reading documents. The latter reinforced the school-wide focus on incorporating the instructional shifts into the planning and execution of lessons. In the 7th grade physical education class, the teacher used a graphic organizer to introduce the skill and history of tennis. The teacher then demonstrated the concepts of hand-eye coordination, follow through, and the expected sequence of step-bop-catch. Students then worked in pairs to practice the skills of hand-eye coordination with step-bop-catch. The pre-kindergarten students were engaged in different stations that complimented their unit on butterflies. One group of students observed butterflies hatching from their cocoons with magnifying glasses and they were able to use content vocabulary including “cocoon” and “metamorphosis”. They also exhibited number sense around how many hatched versus how many cocoons were in the net. Another student in this class used manipulatives to reenact the sequence of the story *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. As a result of these practices, across classrooms teaching strategies consistently provide all learners, including English language learners and special education students, with multiple entry points into the curriculum that foster the demonstration of higher order questioning and challenging tasks evident in student work products.

- School leaders align resources to support the school’s instructional goals by ensuring that teachers have structured meeting time that lead to improved instruction and students creating meaningful work products. (1.3)
 - The principal firmly believes that, “...all resources need to benefit teachers, students, and parents.” This school year’s instructional goals included utilizing the Danielson Framework to improve teaching and develop teachers’ practice via self-assessments and professional development, incorporating technology to support instruction, and utilizing a data specialist to provide support for aligning assessment results to instructional needs. To facilitate the achievement of these goals, all the teachers have two to three periods of common planning time, an hour of professional development connected to the Danielson Framework, and per diem teachers are hired to assist with additional professional development opportunities for teachers. There is also a data specialist on staff to assist teachers with data collection and alignment to instructional practices. Teachers and students have access to Smart Boards and laptops in classrooms as well as in their technology lab. In addition, students have several chances to participate in school activities that are outside of the school day. Examples include an afterschool program for English language arts and math instruction, a theater and arts program that included opportunities for students to participate in Disney Jr. and Broadway Jr. Students put on productions of *The Little Mermaid* and *The Aristocats Kids*. There is a health and fitness club, a step team, spelling

bees, a film program and volunteer programs for maintaining the school library. All of these programs were funded via the school budget as well as grants received from city council. These funding decisions and intentional scheduling reveal thoughtful organizational decisions that support the school's instructional goals and students' learning needs.

- Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment through the use of rubrics, conferences, and common assessments meeting the needs of all learners. (2.2)
 - The school leader has a comprehensive understanding of the value and use of assessment data to influence and drive instruction school wide. All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are given formative and summative assessments that measure skills, standards acquisition, and content knowledge acquired before, during, and following units of study. The school uses Fountas and Pinnell; teacher made assessments, measures of student learning assessments, curriculum-based assessments, and standardized tests to create baselines for students that are benchmarked throughout the school year. Both the school leader and teachers demonstrated that they are tracking and making adjustments to curriculum, lesson plans, student groupings, and tasks based on student performance data. In classrooms, teachers were seen grouping students according to their ability and assigning tasks based on students' capacity. Furthermore, teachers assessed students as they work via the use of questioning, rubrics, and student reflections. In a 4th grade classroom, students presented oral reports about careers of interest. As students presented, the student audience referred to a rubric that assessed delivery, content/organization, and enthusiasm/audience awareness across a 4-point scale. In conjunction with the rubric, students used a peer assessment to determine elements of the presentation such as, "gave an interesting introduction", "used complete sentences", and "maintained the interest of the class". During the student conversations, 3rd and 4th grade students shared item skills analysis data from GO Math! along with individual teaching plans and work products that addressed deficiencies. Furthermore, students were able to explain errors and the teaching strategies that remedied their challenges. As a result of these assessment practices, teachers' pedagogy consistently reflects the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment so that effective instructional adjustments meet students' learning needs.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the observation process to provide feedback to teachers which capture strengths, challenges, and next steps that are aligned with professional development to elevate instructional practices. (4.1)
 - The principal expressed that, "professional development changes the instructional practices at this school. This year, Danielson was new to the teachers, so we had engaged them in [professional development] that exposed them to the rubric." To prepare teachers for the Danielson Framework, teachers took a self-assessment that assessed their knowledge of the rubric and then met with the principal to establish areas for observation and growth. As a whole, the data revealed that the

faculty needed growth in the areas of questioning and discussion as well as in assessment. Teachers were observed and provided feedback via the Advance system, ultimately identifying areas as ineffective, developing, effective, and highly effective. Beyond these ratings there was no additional feedback that indicated strengths, challenges, and next steps. The principal shared that teachers were given directions to view videos on ARIS that highlighted their areas for improvement. However, there were no evident clear links between areas for growth, observation data, and assigned professional development. As a result of this observation/feedback practice, teachers are not given an opportunity to receive specific, actionable, time-bound, and prioritized feedback that is aligned to professional development, thus hindering professional growth and reflection.

- Refine teacher team collaboration to consistently analyze assessment data and student work promoting the achievement of school goals and the CCLS, resulting in improved teacher practice and progress for all students. (4.2)
 - The collaborative culture of the school is evident in the teachers' schedule which allows for common planning time, meeting with parents via open classroom days or appointments, and meetings with the administrators for professional development. Teachers meet on a weekly basis to discuss student work, instruction, curriculum, and the evolving needs of the school community. During the math meeting, teachers compared student work by sharing three levels of student work. The presenting teacher enlisted feedback, asked questions, and collaboratively engaged his colleagues in ways to make it "understandable" for his students. The English language arts team also reviewed student work by comparing student work products while the presenter listened, questioned and shared new teaching ideas. While there was clear evidence that the teachers routinely met with a set agenda and expectations, it was not evident how their findings from student work analysis linked to assessment data that changed or differentiated classroom instruction or curriculum planning for all students. As a result of this teaming model, professional collaborations at the school are structured, but teams inconsistently analyze assessment data and student work products; limited opportunities for improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: PS/IS 323	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 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							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	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							
<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 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