



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Carter G. Woodson

Elementary School K023

**545 Willoughby Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Celina F. Napolitano

**Date of review: February 26, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone**

The School Context

Carter G. Woodson is an elementary school with 276 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 52% Black, 46% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional development opportunities. Training and performance updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures are in place among staff, students, and families to provide ongoing feedback on a set of expectations resulting in a path to increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- In the beginning of the year, expectations were set forth regarding what instruction should look like in such documents as, What a Math Day Looks Like at PS 23. Teachers receive supports such as a lesson plan checklist and guidelines on creating a classroom team approach for teachers and para-professionals. School leaders and teachers articulated the school goals. One teacher commented, “Our focus is literacy and vocabulary building.”
- School leaders have emphasized the importance of the role of questioning, discussion, and vocabulary acquisition. Written feedback to teachers includes specific observations, comments, and next steps for teacher improvement, which highlight the expectations of the Danielson Framework and the school’s instructional focus. One comment reads, “Extend students’ thinking; have them give you another word (and) use the word in a sentence . . . Use more of the vocabulary words we are focusing on and refer to the word wall.” Feedback also makes note of practices that are aligned to school-wide expectations, such as, “You did pose questions designed to promote student thinking and understanding.”
- Training to meet the expectations of the Danielson Framework and school-wide goals include inter-visitations to observe practice and build capacity. In addition, professional development includes sessions such as, Improve Vocabulary Acquisition, and Successfully Solving Mathematical Word Problems through Increasing Understanding of Mathematical Vocabulary.
- To engage parents in discussions about academic expectations and provide supports to families to help their children succeed, a series of workshops has been offered such as Strategies for Multiplication – How to Make Multiplication Easy. Resources include a document titled, Reviewing Letter Formations with Your Child and a pamphlet of games in both literacy and math that children and families can engage in together.
- During a parent meeting, parents spoke about how the school keeps them informed about their children’s progress. Progress reports are distributed between report cards and teachers communicate regularly with parents. One parent stated, “We find a way together to help my child.” Parents are aware that each child has his or her own goals and they work with teachers to implement strategies to achieve them. A parent commented, “My son scored three on the state exam but the teacher said it’s pulling teeth to write. So the teacher suggested getting him a journal.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points to cognitively engage all students. Work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

Inconsistency in providing multiple entry points prevents all students from engaging in challenging tasks and demonstration of higher order thinking so that across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms there were a number of scaffolds to assist students in accessing the curriculum such as charts, visuals, graphic organizers, and differentiated tasks. For example, in a first grade class with many English language learners, students were asked to tell a story that indicated beginning, middle, and end with the aid of a graphic organizer. According to their level, some students illustrated their story only, some illustrated and also wrote, some only wrote. However, use of differentiated strategies was uneven across classrooms. In a fifth grade class, the highest performing group was reading a text to identify five details and the author's point of view; a lower performing group was using the same graphic organizer, but students were struggling to complete it.
- In most classes visited, students were grouped according to level and need, although students' engagement in appropriately leveled work, across classrooms, varied. For example, in a grade 2/3 math class student tasks were differentiated with degrees of challenge. One group worked on basic math facts, another group worked on the commutative property of multiplication and the higher-level group worked on dividends. However, in other classes, student tasks did not support opportunities for students to challenge themselves independently to extend their thinking on the lesson and concepts at hand. For example, in a second grade class, all students worked on place value for three digit numbers with whole group responses to low level prompts such as, "I'm thinking of a word that starts with a 'v'," to which a student replied, "value."
- Across classes, there were opportunities for students to turn and talk to their tablemates and work in groups. For example, in a second grade class, students worked together to write numbers in different ways. In a grade 2/3 class students worked together with manipulatives to practice basic facts. However, across classes, partner or small group discussion to contemplate a higher order question, think through an answer, and engage in sustained discussion was inconsistently demonstrated. For example, in a second grade class, students were asked to write numbers in different ways and talk to their partners. However, a number of students turned to the teacher rather than work through their thinking collaboratively.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula are purposefully aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and higher order skills are emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

Common Core aligned curricula emphasizing higher-order thinking tasks are building coherence to promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade-level teams, mindful of college and career readiness goals, have refined units of study to align with the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. In literacy, units contain a variety of texts in both fiction and non-fiction, and higher order thinking prompts. In math, Exemplar tasks have been integrated into Envisions and Go Math to ensure rigor in problem-solving and mathematical practices.
- To promote coherence, curriculum maps have been purposely redesigned to highlight specific components. For example, math maps contain big ideas; have separated content and concepts; and include vocabulary, guided questions, and resources including links.
- Higher order skills and academic rigor are embedded in curriculum units through Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DoK) in leveled questioning, prompts, and tasks. A review of lesson plans reveals questioning along the DoK continuum. For example, a fifth grade lesson includes, "What conclusion can be drawn from these three texts? What information can you gather to support your idea about the value and importance of conserving natural resources?"
- All teachers' lesson plans include specific scaffolds for class subgroups. For example, a fifth grade math lesson includes a gestures scaffold to make clear connections, the introduction of key vocabulary for English language learners; and base 10 blocks, whiteboards, and counters for students who are at the bottom one-third of the class.
- Units of study are designed so that all students can have access to curricular content and skills. For example, a unit on penguins appropriate to grades 2 and 3 requires the writing of an opinion piece. The unit contains texts identified by Lexile level, scaffolds including sentence starters, visuals for vocabulary acquisition, and graphic organizers to assist in the organization of the piece of writing. In math, adaptations of Exemplar tasks are selected to meet the needs of English language learners.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers use common assessments and rubrics aligned to the school curricula to track student progress and adjust curricula and instruction. They consistently check for understanding as well as provide opportunities for students to assess their own work.

Impact

Effective data-based curricula and lesson adjustments meet students' instructional needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers employ a Surfacing Gaps protocol to look at individual student work to note low inference observations regarding what the work reveals about a student's skills, knowledge and thinking; what the standards behind the task require the student to know and do; what the gaps are between the current and desired student thinking; and the implications for instructional planning. In reviewing a second grade student's work, the teacher noted that the gaps in the student's work centered on the need to add an explanation to provide a stronger answer to the question. The teacher's planning notes included revision of lessons to help the student provide additional examples and details to explain and defend thinking, as well as instruction for increasing the student's use of linking words to extend writing.
- Assessment data is shared with students and students are able to articulate their goals. During a student meeting, students spoke about their goals that were determined as a result of a variety of assessments. One student said, "I need to use more mature words." Another student said, "In reading, I need to collect information to figure out the author's point of view." Still another student stated, "When we achieve our goal, we choose another and the teacher talks to us to see if that's our goal or if we need another."
- Across classrooms visited, checks for understanding included a number of strategies such as teachers circulating and annotating, the use of exit slips and student-written slips inserted in baggies indicating their level of understanding expressed as, "Need help", "Almost there", and "Got it." Circulating allowed teachers to make immediate adjustments. For example, in a second grade class, the teacher, seeing that some students were struggling with place value, stopped students and asked them to look at a three-digit number and determine how many hundreds it represented modeling where to put the hundreds number followed by tens and ones place values.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The collaborative work of teacher teams has resulted in improvements to pedagogical practice and a strong voice in key decisions affecting supports for student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The fourth grade team gathers teachers of different subjects who rotate bringing in student work to be examined. During the team meeting observed, teachers reviewed students' opinion pieces to look for sentence fluency and word choice in regards to content and text evidence and noticed that sentence fluency was an area in need of improvement. In reviewing teacher work, they determined that graphic organizers should flow more like an outline and decided to redesign the graphic organizer for opinion writing tasks as their next step.
- The second grade teacher team spoke about looking at student work to identify issues in teaching and learning in order to improve instructional practice. During the teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about reviewing student pieces where they saw that students were writing mostly simple sentences. Planned revisions for instruction included lessons that required students to create more complex sentences by adding more detail to simple sentences.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers explained their input in selecting Wonders as part of the curriculum and instituting the word of the day. Teacher leaders, who assume responsibility for team outcomes, lead teams. Team members lead professional development sessions for fellow teachers. In addition, to build leadership capacity, the school has four teachers who are interns in education leadership programs.