



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Samuel F. Dupont

Elementary School K031

**75 Meserole Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11222**

Principal: Mary Scarlato

Date of review: November 17, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

The School Context

Samuel F. Dupont is an elementary school with 596 students from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 5% Black, 47% Hispanic, 38% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	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	Well Developed
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:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations for instruction consistently and create collaborative opportunities for professional learning. The school partners with families to support student progress towards achieving next educational steps.

Impact

The school's supportive structures to achieve high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability for student progress in a pathway to college and careers and improved teacher practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and leaders deliberately embed the school's instructional focus on questioning and discussion by implementing a research based program, Strategic Thinking Skills that underpins the school's beliefs system and sets expectations for teaching and learning. This program is used to support components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and drives professional learning and classroom practices as evident in the school's professional development plan and in class visits.
- Lead teachers and administrators meet regularly during the summer and the school year to plan curriculum orientations and workshops for all teachers. These professional learning opportunities, combined with frequent classroom visits and walkthroughs, hold staff mutually accountable for meeting instructional expectations. Ongoing training reinforces clearly defined professional development standards for the school. In response to input from teacher surveys on professional learning communities, the school focuses on building capacity in promoting critical thinking skills.
- Teachers and leaders consistently communicate with parents about the goals and expectations for learning and provide families with next steps and frequent feedback on their children's progress. In addition to assessment results sent home regularly, grade-level teams create monthly newsletters for parents with information regarding mastery of skills. For example, Grade 4 News informs the parents about teaching students how to use text evidence in writing and inference in reading. Pre-Kindergarten teachers provide detailed information about the use of building blocks and centers for teaching math concepts and letters of the alphabet.
- Parents shared that the school goals to improve student learning and achievement, especially in writing, are accomplished by the supportive school's approach they called "one child at a time". These goals are accompanied by high expectations to meet the benchmarks of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and in preparation for the next educational level and beyond.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

While school leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, the strategic use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments in daily lessons and units varies across classrooms.

Impact

Although the school has a system of periodic and common assessments, teachers across the vast majority of classrooms do not always effectively adjust their lessons and units to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school creates periodic assessments in all content areas, such as unit and comprehension tests and reading inventory, which provide information on student performance and progress towards grade level benchmarks. Teachers also use rubrics to assess writing. All assessments are aligned to the curriculum.
- The 3rd grade team analyzed student opinion writing using a two-point rubric for evaluating a short response to develop next instructional steps such as introducing peer editing and teaching synonyms to support vocabulary acquisition for English language learners (Ells).
- Although teachers and leaders consistently track academic progress and tally results from periodic assessments to identify students, including Ells and students with special needs, for academic intervention services outside of classrooms, this data and information are not always strategically used in daily lessons and units. In one integrated co-teaching class, for example, teachers planned for flexible groups and gave modified reading comprehension tasks with differentiated access points based on their knowledge of student achievement and identified academic needs. In another class, however, a teacher, after probing students' prior knowledge on identifying a main idea, continued with a lesson plan and a task and the same materials without making modifications based on students' expressed misconceptions or mastery of the skill.
- While teachers across the grades ask students to write reflections in math journals and encourage peer and self-assessment, the use of ongoing checks for understanding to meet all students' learning needs varies across classrooms. In some classes teachers ask for thumbs up for students to indicate that they understand a concept or find evidence in a text. Teachers also review previously taught content by asking questions to assess students' understanding in order to inform teaching. Yet in some classes, teachers proceed with planned lessons without using information from the skill review. In one math class, for example, all students were directed to complete the same set of problems regardless of the fact that some of them showed proficiency and mastery of the concept taught.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts. Higher-order skills and questions are consistently emphasized across grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions result in instructional coherence that promotes college and career readiness for all learners. Students benefit from academic tasks designed to boost their thinking across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- English language arts units of study integrate the following instructional shifts that prepare students for college and career: citing text evidence in written responses and discussions, academic and content vocabulary, and balancing informational and literary texts. In math, deep understanding, content vocabulary and journal writing about problem solving are consistently embedded in unit and lesson plans.
- Writing across curricula is integrated in all content areas and reflects this year's instructional priority. For example, a 1st grade math unit incorporates language objectives for students to use mathematical terms and vocabulary when writing and speaking about problem solutions. A science unit about characteristics of matter also incorporates writing standards to conduct short research and gather information.
- The school promotes college and career readiness in five critical academic and personal behaviors that are addressed within units of study and posted on bulletin boards: persistence, engagement, work habits/organization, communication/collaboration and self-regulation.
- Literacy tasks include higher-order skills and tiered comprehension questions for identified groups of students including ELLs and students with disabilities. A review of unit plans also revealed that teachers plan essential questions and "I can" statements for students to better understand and internalize rigorous tasks and standards in literacy and math.

Findings

While pedagogy, anchored in common beliefs, provides consistent instructional supports, including scaffolds and questioning, the use of strategic extensions that foster higher order thinking demonstrated in rigorous student work and discussions varies across the school.

Impact

Differentiated access points to support student engagement in tasks and discussions are not always strategically planned so that all learners demonstrate critical and analytical thinking and high levels of participation across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief system about how students learn best is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers and leaders discuss approaches for higher-order questioning and student participation in professional development and at team levels. The Strategic Thinking Skills program further anchors common beliefs and shared understanding of student engagement in lessons.
- During a social studies class in grade 3, students worked in groups and discussed similarities and differences between the American and Chinese cultures in celebrating a New Year. They also shared evidence from the text they were reading and identified their next steps as putting their analysis in writing short response answers to two questions. Teachers in classrooms visited provided opportunities for group and partner discussions. Students used graphic organizers to collect information.
- While conversations with diverse students indicated they consistently work in groups and are provided with prompts for discussions and high-order comprehension questions, extensions to the lessons did not fully engage higher achieving students. Classroom visits revealed that although all students are engaged in responding to tasks with partners or in groups, early finishers have limited opportunities to extend their thinking beyond the class assignment.
- A review of student work in portfolios and on bulletin boards revealed consistent work in response to literary and informational text with citing evidence, as well as personal narrative or research based writing and problem solving. Yet some tasks simply required students to answer a set of questions associated with assigned texts and did not challenge students to make independently deeper connections.

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

Teachers are engaged in collaborative teams that focus on the implementation of the standards and examining student work. Leadership structures give opportunities for teachers to have a voice in key decisions regarding curriculum and teacher practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy, student growth, and better professional collaborations. These structures have built capacity to improve instruction for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade-level teacher teams have regularly scheduled opportunities to work collaboratively on planning and improving practices. Teachers also adjust existing units of study by adding thinking skills and strategies. The school is now shifting the focus of this work toward collaborative inquiry centered on looking at student writing to meet one of the school-wide improvement goals.
- The 3rd grade teacher team, for example, uses a research-based protocol to analyze student writing and to delineate implications for instruction with specific strategies to support identified groups of students. This team has presented their collaborative inquiry and learning from student work to the faculty and shared the protocol demonstrating steps and findings.
- Teacher teams regularly analyze student data from periodic assessments and writing tasks. As a result of this collaborative effort by grade-level teachers and the school leadership, student writing has improved across grades as demonstrated on bulletin boards and in writing folders.
- Meetings with teacher teams revealed they contribute to the school's curricular decisions. After analysis of the student achievement data on standardized assessments, teachers suggested changes to teaching literacy, with emphasis on a stronger writing approach and program. Similarly, they collaboratively work towards improving teaching practices. For example, teachers receive professional development in the implementation of strategic thinking skills that the leadership provides in response to their input. Grade-level lead teacher leads are responsible for supporting their teams with regular turnkey of information from workshops and vertical planning.