



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Oliver H. Perry

Elementary School K034

**131 Norman Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11222**

Principal: Carmen Asselta

**Date of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Steven Chernigoff**

The School Context

P.S. 34 is an elementary school with 509 students from grade PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 18% Hispanic, 74% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.4%.

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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

The school's high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability and allows the school to successfully partner with families to support student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates very high expectations to staff through a variety of means, such as a staff handbook; monthly newsletter; weekly reflection sheets in which she notes what she and the assistant principal have seen in classes that week; grade, professional learning community and faculty meetings; verbal feedback on daily walk-throughs; modelling behaviors towards students and parents; and especially through observation reports. Feedback on Advance observations reveals high expectations for teacher practice, even where teachers are receiving Highly Effective and Effective ratings. The feedback is time-bound and specific to improving teacher practice and student outcomes, and shows that administrators will look for improvement in these areas the next time they visit.
- Just as school leaders have high expectations, teachers insist on a culture of feedback and continuous improvement. Teachers implemented their own cycle of inter-visitations of each other's classrooms, meeting both before and after the visits to debrief and share their learnings. The physical layout of the school, which has no corridors and doors opening from room to room, allows and encourages teachers to be open and welcoming to colleagues, and see each other's best practices. Administrators expect teachers to visit each other, allow them to visit other schools, and encourage them to attend various professional development opportunities, through central, the network, universities and outside vendors. All adults are expected to learn, and to model excellence to students, and teachers report continuous improvement in their practice and student achievement.
- The school fully supports students and families on a path toward college and career readiness. Children spoke of college as a goal in many classes and meetings, and were able to articulate expectations for middle and high school. The quality of feedback they receive in response to their class work and written assignments makes them confident that they are fully prepared for life beyond PS 34. Families feel very well supported by the school and that their children will be well prepared for the next level of schooling. Families have the ability to contribute to the school in many ways, through the Parents Association and directly to students. While talking to the principal, one parent, who works in a STEM field, volunteered to teach Lego Robotics, pushing into ICT kindergarten, first, second and third grades, and will be starting a cycle with fourth and fifth graders soon. Other parents report that the school is very serious about collaborating with parents, and invites them into classes to share expertise, give presentations and work with students whenever they are available.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson framework and the instructional shifts, and informed by discussions at the team and school levels. Across the vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Impact

Common instructional strategies across classes and grades provide students access to the curriculum, allow them to study subjects in depth, and engage in high levels of thinking, leading to high level student work products and ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus of feedback as a tool for meaningful instructional improvement, specifically in response to writing, is very evident. Feedback comes from teachers, peers and through self-assessment. Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers provided feedback to students and students engaged in conversations with each other around their work and discussed strategies for improving it. In a fourth grade ICT classroom, students created dialogues between characters from colonial America. The teachers constantly gave students feedback. One teacher said to a student, "Is this the way a person in colonial America would speak?" and gave further specific advice. The other teacher gave feedback to another student and then said to the class, "Make sure you use some vocabulary from colonial America boys and girls! I want to see a little more vocabulary from your research."
- Teachers employ questioning as well as reciprocal teaching strategies that lead to very high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership. Student discussions stick to the task, children question each other and this leads to excellent work products. In a first grade literacy lesson about astronomy, the teacher read parts of the text out loud and showed the class different pictures of stars. The teacher asked, "Why do astronomers work in the mountains?" and students replied, "So no trees are blocking" and, "Where there are no buildings so they can see them better." Later, the teacher asked, "Why are some stars red and some blue? Discuss it with your partner," and students did so.
- Student engagement and ownership of their learning were consistently high. In a fourth grade math lesson the teacher worked with various groups while the students worked on an Exemplar problem and discussed the particular math model that each student used to solve it. In their groups, students solved the problem and then compared how they did it with how their peers solved it. Then students commented on each other's method. When asked why they need to utilize different ways of solving the problem, one student said, "You have to know how to do it for yourself [and thus use the one you are most comfortable with] and because the other student might be wrong." Another student said, "We have to check our thinking."

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All of the schools' curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Alignment of curricula results in coherence across grades and subject areas, which promotes college and career readiness for all students and encourages all learners, including ELLs and SWDs, to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administrators meet regularly to review core curriculum options. They chose to use Core Knowledge as its literacy curriculum in grades K-2 and Expeditionary Learning for 3-5. In every grade, teachers supplement the literacy curriculum with additional texts on a variety of levels and to achieve a 50-50 balance between fiction and non-fiction, as well as with many writing assignments to engage students. The school emphasizes that teachers incorporate DOK level 3 and 4 questions into every lesson plan. For the math curriculum, teachers and administrators also worked together to choose Go Math for all grades and to supplement it with Exemplars, to emphasize number sense, math language and mathematical modeling.
- Teachers promote rigorous habits and higher-order skills in all curricula and academic tasks. All units in literacy are academically rich in vocabulary and reading comprehension tasks that promote critical thinking and analysis. The reading comprehension questions within each unit story are differentiated and promote deeper understanding of concepts. Teachers create extension projects for faster-progressing students in addition to providing supports and multiple entry points for special needs populations.
- Teachers have created very rigorous academic tasks and writing assignments within each unit. Student writing in response to these tasks demonstrates sophisticated thinking and outstanding writing skills. The tasks are coherent within and across grades, and students constantly must demonstrate their thinking. Core Knowledge asked students only to write paragraphs, but the school recognized that their students are capable of writing essays. So the school adopted Expeditionary Learning to have more substantive reading units in the upper grades and supplemented those with sophisticated writing topics.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teachers create and use assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Their assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The school's assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and allow teachers to make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs, and so that students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Every task and unit observed has a rubric that teachers have created in grade teams or use from the curriculum. Student work is of a very high level, with very specific and substantive feedback provided to students so they know their next steps and how to achieve them. In looking at student work, teachers push their high achievers to work beyond their grade level. Where appropriate, teachers will give students tasks for the next grade up and use the rubric for that higher level to help them improve even further. A first grade teacher identified a number of students who are capable of second-grade level writing and is holding those students to that rubric. Throughout the school, students are able to explain why their work received the grade it did and also what they need to do to improve it further.
- The instructional focus of providing actionable feedback is evident throughout the school. Feedback to students is provided through individual conferences with students on an ongoing basis and in written form in response to student work. Feedback throughout the school was observed to be highly specific to each student's strengths and weaknesses and targeted towards helping students meet and exceed the standard of each grade's writing rubric. Teachers clearly take pride in responding to students' work in such depth and pushing them to ever-higher levels of achievement, which school leaders report they are attaining.
- Teachers use MOSL baseline assessments, data from NYS exams in English language arts and math, curricular unit and chapter tests consistently. Teachers assess students' reading skills through Fountas and Pinell as a baseline at the beginning of the year and then three more times (October, January and March) to track student progress and adjust instruction.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations, in which they take ownership and provide leadership.

Impact

Teachers’ professional collaborations have strengthened teacher practice and increased student achievement for all learners, and allow teachers to play an integral role in key decisions within the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are involved in inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teachers meet in horizontal grade-level teams and also vertical inquiry teams. They had the opportunity to choose from a menu of professional learning community (PLC) opportunities to study a specific issue of concern to the school. This menu was created through a collaboration of teachers and administrators. The PLC devoted to collaborative inquiry around feedback formed, looked at published research (“The Power of Feedback” from Review of Educational Research) and then looked at student work.
- The Feedback inquiry team looked at student data to adjust their curricula and tasks in the various grades to include more writing strategies, accountable talk activities and peer editing to provide students with more opportunities to improve their writing and receive better feedback. Teachers began to use a rubric for self-assessment as well as for peer feedback, named TAG (Tell a partner, Ask a friend and Give them a suggestion). Integrated co-teaching teachers looked at how and when their general education colleagues were providing feedback to students and determined that their students, especially the ones with disabilities, needed to receive feedback earlier in the writing process in order to improve their work by the final draft. Their students’ work improved dramatically after that.
- Teachers lead the teams they participate in, both grade-level and vertical teams. The team leader collaborates with his/her colleagues to set the agenda, find additional resources and assign next steps. Teachers worked with administration to come up with the focus for the various inquiry teams. They also played a key role in deciding to switch from previous curricula to the ones they currently use.