



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Walter Francis White School

Elementary-Middle School K041

**411 Thatford Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Therese Siegel

**Date of review: March 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

The Walter Francis White School is an elementary-middle school with 524 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 63% Black, 34% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.0%.

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	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
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Findings

Administrators systematically convey high expectations about teaching and learning and engage families in partnerships that empower them to help their children succeed in meeting the school's expectations.

Impact

Communication of and targeted supports for attainment of high expectations promote collective responsibility for learning and result in ongoing improvement in staff and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- There are weekly instructional memoranda and a staff newsletter that explicitly state expectations linked to targeted components of the Danielson Framework, the instructional focus across the school, content specific instructional steps, and supports and materials that must be evident in all classrooms, such that teachers model as part of their explicit instruction, include scaffolds such as videos and multiple texts, and assess daily, thus providing for engaging learning and addressing students' needs. Additionally, tools such as a lesson plan template, faculty handbook, curriculum binders, instructional memoranda, data collection sheets, and templates for analyzing student work are distributed to all staff, further specifying the school's high expectations for teaching and learning.
- Administrators use conference notes, classroom visits, reviews of unit and lesson plans, feedback from observations, and analyses of student work, to hold all staff accountable for the school's high expectations. The principal uses a spreadsheet to share class specific results on assessments, identifying individual and groups of students who met or did not meet a targeted level of mastery. Observation reports show explicit next steps for the re-teaching of content and skills not yet mastered by students. Teachers reported that administrators visit classrooms regularly to offer additional support and feedback.
- The school's professional development plan indicates that all teachers receive ongoing training in planning and delivering rigorous instruction and implementing social-emotional learning initiatives. Teachers are trained in topics such as "Question Formulation Techniques" and "Using Assessment in Instruction" to improve their pedagogy. They were also trained to implement a Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) and a peer mentoring program to build students' college and career readiness skills. The principal noted that these activities have contributed to improvement in staff and student performance as seen in teacher observation data and student data from assessments.
- During the parent meeting, parents praised the school for its high expectations and added that they are kept abreast of their children's progress toward those expectations, via progress reports, report cards, phone calls and emails from some teachers, as well as weekly conferences on Tuesdays, open house, and "Family Nights". One parent noted that workshops on college and career readiness and Common Core Learning Standards inform them about what their children are learning and how to help them at home, while another parent added that they learn about high expectations as the school regularly sends messages, grades and reports, which families are able to view from home by logging in to Engrade.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While some teachers use teaching strategies that engage students at all levels, some lessons viewed neither incorporated rigorous tasks nor immersed all students in deep peer-to-peer discussions linked to complex texts.

Impact

There were missed opportunities to deepen learning by all students via challenging tasks and discussions that consistently demand higher order thinking across disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in some classrooms engaged students in challenging tasks such as reading texts to cite evidence to respond to tasks and to use academic vocabulary to explain a solution to a problem. For example, in a fourth grade math class students were challenged to work with a partner on problem solving in math, using fraction strips to compare fractions with like and unlike denominators. However, in other classrooms tasks were of low demand, as in a sixth grade classroom where students participated in analyzing a picture and watching a short video in order to create a class definition of “teen activism”, which most students were already familiar with and were readily able to tell stories about when asked.
- In an eighth grade math class focused on “simplifying and solving linear equations”, the teacher immersed small groups of students in taking turns to shuffle a teacher-created deck of cards to find the card with the solution for the corresponding problem on another card. Students were able to work with little input from the teacher and many found the matching pairs of problems and solutions. By contrast in a seventh grade science class, where students were directed to use the textbook to respond to “Do Now” questions, a teacher-led discussion of a few students’ responses resulted in limited student participation in the discussion and little time for the main task - a lab investigation - as per the lesson plan.
- In some classrooms visited, teachers assigned tasks that evoked discussions, as students quoted evidence from texts to support claims or validate responses to teacher-generated questions. For example, in a fifth grade social studies class students had an opportunity to turn-and-talk to identify causes of the Civil War as they read from the textbook. A lively discussion with high levels of peer-to-peer discussion was evident across the room. In other classrooms, lessons did not illustrate this high level of participation in higher order thinking discussions, inclusive of peer-to-peer questioning. In a lower grade classroom, the teacher’s attempt to foster student-to-student questioning and discussion led to several students taking over the lesson around word problems involving addition and subtraction, as illustrated by a T-chart showing fruits of varying numbers. Students asked each other questions that veered away from the stated lesson objective while the teacher looked on and was not able to get the lesson back on track.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Using student work and data, the school creates and implements curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, across all grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's commitment to continuously reviewing and adjusting curricula results in coherently sequenced Common Core aligned units of study with academic tasks designed to accelerate learning by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's curriculum binders highlight grade level monthly pacing calendars and detailed curriculum maps that chart cross-discipline outcomes for writing, reading, listening, and speaking, across classrooms and content areas. The binder incorporates Common Core aligned units and tasks derived from revisions of past units, adjustment of lessons from Engage NY, and use of curriculum resources such as Ready Gen, GO Math, Code X and CMP3 for unit and task development across grades and content areas. Pacing calendars aligned to the New York City scope and sequence guide instruction in social studies and Harcourt Science resources are used in science.
- Unit plans link to "Focus Standards" selected for each grade, based on assessment data and as part of the school's focus on the instructional shifts. A Code X pacing calendar targets math standards by grade and sample tasks for each standard and includes student activities such as solving complex math problems. A "Monthly Writing Focus" document illustrates targeted literacy standards for each grade and sample writing tasks that address each standard, including requiring students to engage in activities such as composing explanations of inferences from texts, preparing summaries of reading selections, and writing on topics across genres. Curricula also include topics and skills related to the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) program designed to teach all students "the three 'Rs'-Respect, Responsibility, and Reason".
- Using analysis of student work and data, staffs plan academic tasks that include manipulatives, technology, enrichment activities, and differentiated approaches. Furthermore, the incorporation of the Universal Design for Learning principles ensures access for English language learners and students with disabilities into the written curricula. Teachers' lesson plans also evidence planning for all students as they include tiered tasks and differentiated approaches for students to be cognitively engaged in the content standards.
- Minutes of meetings show that teacher teams conducted data analysis of student baseline assessments and reviewed student work samples to determine adjustments needed to alignment instruction to Common Core Learning Standards. For example, teachers examined student work with a focus on students' proficiency in producing informational and argumentative writing. The school followed up with the use of writing units from Teachers' College to deepen writing instruction.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Analysis of student work and a variety of student assessment data provide staff with relevant information on students' performance and inform adjustments to curricula and instruction. Students receive feedback relative to their performance and progress on a variety of assessments.

Impact

Teachers and students have data with which to inform their next steps. Teacher interventions and curricula adjustments address specific individual student needs and accelerate student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer a range of assessments, including Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments (Ready Gen, Go Math and New York City Performance Series assessments) Running Records, guided reading conferences, end-of-chapter and end-of-unit assessments, to assess student's proficiency and content knowledge. The principal uses spreadsheets with data for individual as well as subgroups of students (Schoolnet data, Progress at a Glance, and Standards at a Glance charts) to record levels of growth relative to student achievement across assessments.
- Teachers use a school-wide grading policy and task-specific rubrics aligned to curricula to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines. For example, a "Summarizing" and an "Opinion Writing Rubric", attached to samples of work for each student, provided feedback on work seen on classroom bulletin boards and in students' folders. Across grades and subjects, a portfolio maintained by each student evidences teacher and student monitoring of progress from one assessment to the next. The folder includes rubrics for assessment of the task, copies of each assessment, and the student's work with scores and teacher comments about the student's strengths and areas of need.
- During the student meeting, students stated that they are all well aware of grading practices and expectations for mastery as teachers regularly engage them in conferences for goal setting and review of their work. They displayed rubrics and checklists from their portfolios and explained that teachers guide them in using the rubrics and checklists to determine what they need to do to "get a good score". Some students noted that they also go online to look at their performance data on Engrade and others reported that they get feedback on problems that they do from IXL, an online skills building program.
- Minutes and agendas of team meetings indicate that all teachers meet regularly and engage in the collection, disaggregation, and analysis of data from assessments. Teachers stated that they use assessment data to form guided reading groups with differentiated tasks. The principal described adjustments to math curricula to now incorporate activities that provide deeper coverage of the "major work of the grade" and improved alignment to "focus standards" identified for each grade. The principal also noted that as a result of a review of grade-level assessment data, the school added writing units from Teachers' College curricula and other supplemental materials to infuse more writing into all content areas.

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

The majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that are focused on the goal of implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, the embedded instructional shifts, and the attainment of other school wide goals. Distributed leadership structures support the development of teacher leadership and teachers have a voice in decisions that affect learning across the school.

Impact

Collaborative analysis of student work and data, along with teacher input in school level decision making, contribute to improvement of teacher practice and student mastery of learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level teachers are programmed for a weekly common planning period and minutes of team meetings show a variety of professional development activities that occur on Mondays, allowing teachers to collaborate regularly on improvements to their practice. Teams identify focus standards and develop unit maps showing content and tasks that reinforce the standards. The documents also show that teachers examined student work to identify areas where students had the most challenges in using reasons and information to write an opinion piece based on texts. The teachers used a writing rubric and an “Instructional Adjustment Action Plan” document to highlight the focus standard and skill, record the type of student deficiency, and determine individual and/or group level needs and next steps.
- At team meetings, teachers refine curricula, develop and evaluate assessments, and design instructional adjustments and improvement plans for follow up work with students. For example, during a teacher team meeting one teacher stated that after each end-of-unit or chapter assessment the grade team examines the results to determine next steps for students who do not meet the mastery target for standards linked to that assessment. They then share ideas in creating an action plan for follow up. Another teacher reported that after analyzing students’ argumentative writing samples she noted a need for additional work on that skill and followed up by introducing “a chart with models of claims and counter claims” which led to improvement in student performance on a re-assessment of that skill.
- Teachers identified for high levels of expertise or recognized as instructional leaders by peers, serve as grade leaders, peer mentors, and/or members of a Grade Band Support Team, building teacher capacity in relation to targeted elements of the Danielson Framework. Other staff members serve in leadership roles such as deans and/or members of teams including Measures of Student Learning, School Leadership, Professional Development, Family Engagement, Student Service, and PBIS, leading to developing leadership capacity, supporting school wide goals, improved teacher pedagogy, and student progress in learning across disciplines.
- Teachers interviewed reported that they have regular input into school decisions. One added that a professional development survey that they implemented yielded teacher feedback that was used by administrators to create a school wide Professional Learning plan for all staff. Others stated that they are empowered to set the agenda for the weekly team meetings, with minimal input from administrators, and routinely recommend instructional resources and choose their own professional development activities.