



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

John D. Wells MS 50

Middle School K050

**183 South 3rd Street
Brooklyn
NY 11211**

Principal: Denise Jamison

**Date of review: May 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki**

The School Context

John D. Wells is a middle school with 229 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population is comprised of 13% Black, 84% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 28% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 87.2%.

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 | Developing |
| 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 | Celebration | 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 | Focus | Developing |
| 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 | Additional Findings | Developing |
| 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 | Developing |

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices are becoming aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DFfT) and to the content curricula, reflecting collaborative efforts to address the school's instructional focus to increase student engagement in rigorous tasks and higher-order thinking.

Impact

Students, including English language learners, have increasing opportunities to demonstrate critical and analytical thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In one English language arts (ELA) class, students in partnerships discussed violence in movies and video games, debating different opinions if parents should monitor what their kids watch and play. This lesson was aligned to the Word Generation component of the literacy block. Special education students worked on the same task and a teacher paired them with other students so they could have an opportunity to participate in answering the initial questions and give their reasoning. Some students articulated their position on parental monitoring and supervision.
- In some classes, teachers group students for class discussions and provide graphic organizers or lists of vocabulary words for diverse learners to be able to respond in writing to informational or fiction texts. In one class, an English language learner had an opportunity to use an iPad to check vocabulary words related to a social studies unit.
- During an instructional period dedicated to the strategic reading, called What I Need (WIN), one ELA teacher provided each flexible grouping of students with differentiated scaffolds and extensions to work on creating higher level questions during book club reading. Students in one group, for example, after sharing their predictions about reading the next book passage, wrote their reading goal for the lesson and then generated clarifying questions using prompts and strategies of reciprocal reading approach.
- In one math class, after watching a video from a Brain Pop website about probability, groups of students played a special sums game. One group, for example, used a dice and had a task to solve a problem of probability of rolling a number less than 2 on a number cube. After the activity, a teacher asked students to discuss if the games were fair or unfair and to provide their reasons.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school is developing their use of common assessments and systems to measure student progress and academic growth. Teachers' assessment practices across classrooms inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

There is a limited amount of measurement of student progress towards goals and of making purposeful adjustments to lessons based on that measurement, thus hindering opportunities to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across classrooms use unit and benchmark tests and are beginning to keep tracking records of student achievement. Similarly, ELA teachers assess students with the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) and use standards-based rubrics to measure student progress in writing and math teachers are developing in their use of rubrics for problem solving.
- Although some teachers guide students in goal setting, this information is not consistently used to adjust units of study and curricula. Students in grade 6, for example, write their plans to improve math skills in division or property of numbers by practicing more and using a web based computer program, called IXL. In reading, some students, including English language learners and special education students, set goals to improve the level of their reading by spending more time on independent reading. Some teachers, however, follow pre-planned curriculum maps and lessons without making adjustments to address the needs of all learners that are embedded in the individual goal setting or resulting from common assessments.
- Likewise, in teams, some teachers started using protocols for looking at student work and are now beginning to outline implications for instruction. Similarly, they use periodic assessments to check for student understanding and to monitor progress, as evident in the literacy tracker introduced to teachers. Despite these efforts, there was little evidence of timely adjustments to instruction for identified groups of students, thus limiting teachers' ability to consistently address and push toward meeting individual student learning needs. Furthermore, classroom visits revealed that while teachers attempt to use questioning or student self-assessment, there are missed opportunities to make immediate adjustments to lessons or units so that all learners can be supported with targeted next steps and specific strategies that can help them to meet their learning goals and needs.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

The school is in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Unit plans and academic tasks are beginning to reflect planning to cognitively engage students in learning.

Impact

The beginning efforts to make decisions to integrate instructional shifts and to develop a process of refining curricula have resulted in more engaging and coherent units of study and lessons.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's ELA department started embedding the Word Generation, a component of the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) in grades 6 and 7 to integrate the instructional shift of teaching academic and content vocabulary. ELA teachers incorporate informational text and are beginning to teach the art of debate, both of which are integral parts of this program. Grade 7 unit plans include the Word Generation vocabulary program in alignment with the reading standards for determining the word meaning and to analyze the impact of specific word choices, as evident in planning artifacts.
- Some ELA teachers have begun planning for student engagement utilizing the approaches of reciprocal reading or a Socratic seminar. A 6th grade lesson plan indicates that the reciprocal teaching higher order strategies of predicting, clarifying, questioning, and summarizing are embedded in tasks for engaging students in talks and discussions about novels they are currently reading in book clubs.
- English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers plan lessons following the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to develop and organize higher order thinking questions, key vocabulary words, and student activities for cognitive engagement. Scaffolding, grouping, processes and strategies are listed in plans and teachers determine for each lesson which ones provide best access for ELLs. Teachers also include guided practice or labeling pictures as access points to answering multiple choice questions about a reading passage, as evidenced in a lesson plan for a group of bilingual Spanish students in grades 6, 7, and 8.
- Teachers have begun to meet to analyze student work and data. For example, ESL teachers meet with their ELA counterparts to talk about individual student work in an attempt to modify existing lessons and units based on identified gaps in writing.

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

The school leadership has communicated high expectations for learning via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and has started providing purposeful training and professional development. The school is beginning to engage families in understanding of the CCLS and student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Developing structures for professional learning and feedback to teachers are beginning to build a system of mutual accountability for meeting expectations for instruction. As a renewal school, and in partnership with a community based organization, the implementation of school-home communication informing families of student progress and next steps is in the beginning process.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader regularly communicates the expectations for instruction, school goals, policy and procedures in her newsletter called “Keeping Current.” Additionally, the school leaders use faculty conferences and one-on-one meetings with teachers to build common understandings of high expectations that are embedded in the domains and elements of the DFFT
- The school is developing a plan for professional development and training to support all teachers in meeting high expectations for instruction. For example, some teachers and leaders participate in the district-wide monthly collaborations and inter school visitations to learn and share promising teaching practices. Similarly, some teachers have opportunities to work with a coach from the MSQI or a staff developer from the Generation Ready professional support organization.
- School leaders and teachers are in the process of developing informative workshops for families, including the expectations for graduation, next steps, and college and career readiness. In collaboration with the community based organization, El Puente, the school is preparing a series of workshops to engage parents in the decisions regarding the community school and mutual accountability for meeting the expectations of becoming a renewal school. A monthly newsletter, *The Link*, which is also translated to Spanish, is sent to families to inform them about meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and celebrations. Additionally, parents receive news about programs the school is applying for next year to better prepare students for college and career.
- Parents say that the school has started home visits to welcome new students and to explain the expectations for grade level work. Teachers have visited homes of 6th grade students and are in the process of extending home visits to all 7th grade students. MS 50 is part of the National Parent Teacher Home Visit Project.

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| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

The majority of teachers have opportunities to meet and collaborate in teams and are beginning to analyze student work and assessment data.

Impact

The developing inquiry approach across the teams results in emerging systems to monitor student progress towards goals and improve teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- During every Monday professional development time teachers meet for school-wide conferences or in departments to plan units of study. Special education and ESL teachers have some opportunities to plan with content teachers and share student data and assessment results.
- A team of the 8th grade ELA, ESL and special education teachers started meeting regularly to analyze student work for students they all share and to discuss strategies and implications for instruction for individual students. An ESL teacher presents writing samples of some students and then the team identifies gaps and struggles. This team focuses on individual English language learners and determines how to best help identified students to improve in writing claims or finding details.
- Teachers sometimes discuss their practice and instructional approaches to best meet students' needs. Two ESL teachers and some special education teachers share specific multiple entry points for identified students. A special education teacher also shares specific strategies on teaching vocabulary she learned at a professional development workshop such as taking words from informational articles and asking students to visualize them and write their own definitions.
- Teacher teams are beginning to use looking at student work protocols that include components for data analysis, creating common assessments, and sharing practices and next instructional steps. Some protocols also feature student social and emotional needs and habits such as motivation to learn.