Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P. S. 66

Elementary–Middle School K066

845 East 96 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236

Principal: Lucille Jackson

Date of review: February 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone

The School Context

P.S. 66 is an elementary and middle school with 777 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 91% Black, 6% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Celebration**	**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**	**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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Proficient**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Rigorous academic tasks emphasize higher order skills and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
The school's curricular decisions promote college and career readiness, emphasize rigorous habits, and respond to students' needs ensuring cognitive engagement by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents revealed that teachers include a number of resources to ensure alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and meet the needs of their students. For example, the math curriculum incorporates Envision math and Common Core Progress as well as EngageNY units. In literacy, curriculum is based on Common Core Progress along with pieces from ReadyGen and CodeX. These curricula are periodically revised to ensure alignment and coherence. For example, school-wide pacing calendars were adjusted in January to ensure alignment of academic tasks in Envisions and Progress curricula to EngageNY and the New York State Common Core Learning Standards.

- To ensure coherence across grades, teachers meet weekly by subject areas to discuss the spiraling of skills. For example, math teachers from grades six, seven and eight discuss curriculum adjustments and the refinement of the pacing calendars following weekly benchmark assessment results.

- A review of lesson plans and tasks revealed that teachers include and identify a progression of levels of questioning so that students have the opportunity to think about and respond to higher order thinking questions. Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DoK) is used as a means to identify higher order questions. For example, a progression of complexity in a grade 6 sequence of tasks involving ratio and proportions includes asking students to recognize, illustrate, and label their work followed by asking students to infer, compare and interpret by asking if a particular ratio is possible given certain information and to have students explain their answers. This in turn is followed by asking students to develop a logical argument.

- Curricular units ask students to perform rigorous tasks. For example, a fourth grade unit asks students to conduct an investigation project using research techniques; in a fifth grade unit students are required to write an informative essay that describes what is happening to the rain forest and must include graphs, charts, definitions and quotations to support their work; a grade six project in math asked students to develop their own unit on ratio and proportion.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across the school, teaching strategies allow all students to engage in challenging tasks, yet active participation by all students varies across classrooms.

Impact
Across classrooms, curricular supports allow students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities to allow students to extend their thinking and demonstrate initiative so that all learners can take ownership of their work.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teaching strategies included questioning and scaffolds that provided multiple entry points for all students. Entry points and scaffolds included the use of Smartboards, graphic organizers, anchor charts, visuals and differentiated instruction. For example, in a lesson on the calendar in a grades K/1/2 self-contained bridge class**,** different groups of students were given different sheets depicting the calendar. In addition, one group saw a visual of the calendar on chart paper, and one student had sand paper numbers for a tactile experience to assist with number recognition. The use of high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula are evolving school-wide.

- In most classes visited, students engaged in challenging tasks. For example, in a grade 1 class, students presented the posters they had made on weather and were asked to provide feedback to their peers by highlighting something good and giving a suggestion. Students offered, “I like yours because your writing is good and I like your picture.” “The sentences make a lot of sense and they’re true.” “Fix your space a little bit. Some words are squished together.” In a grade 8 math class, students examined patterns of square tiles and toothpick figures of squares or triangles in order to create a table of values from which they graphed the relationship on a coordinate plane to identify the relationship as linear or nonlinear and explained their reasoning. The planning of strategic entry points to support students is progressing across the school.

- In most classrooms visited, students engaged in discussion and participation. For example, in a grade 5 class, student-generated discussion led to multiple ideas regarding the narrator’s point of view. In a grade 4 class, students worked in groups to discuss and apply strategies to adapt a recipe by making equivalency connections with capacity units. However, across classrooms, there were missed opportunities for all students including English language learners and students with disabilities to be engaged through productive talk to question and extend each other’s thinking so as to promote greater consistency across classes of student voice and ownership of the work at hand.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Teachers use common assessments, rubrics aligned to curricula, and checks for understanding to monitor progress and provide students with actionable feedback.

Impact
The school's use of common assessments, curriculum-aligned rubrics and feedback allows teachers to determine student progress and adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Common assessments and common rubrics are used on a grade to provide feedback in the form of rubric-aligned comments and actionable next steps. For example, teacher feedback in a grade 4 class read, "The introduction paragraph needs to restate the question. Add more linking words for a better flow." Feedback in a grade 8 class included comments such as, "You are able to determine how the theme of survival is developed through details by each author. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to support your analysis. Use evidence in the form of quotes. Also, you are ready to elaborate on your thoughts and ideas and to use some more sophisticated language from the unit vocabulary."

- Across classrooms visited, teachers employed checks for understanding which included questioning and circulating as a way to monitor student learning and effect adjustments. For example in a grade 4 class, students were asked to adapt a recipe that serves 6 people to one that would serve 30. Students struggled with an efficient way to manage working on the problem with units of capacity. The teacher called on a student who suggested a way to approach the problem and the teacher clarified that a dash of salt was a variable but not a unit. Another structure is the use of "walls that talk" where students display their level of understanding in categories such as, "Before we move on, I still need to know…", "What made learning difficult for me today…" "Today I learned…", and "Our next step should be…" For example, in a grade 7 class, a student wrote, "Today in ELA class I learned the Cornell note-taking method. I still need a little help understanding it but I feel like it helped me understand internal and external conflict better."

- Students engage in peer and self-assessment. A review of written reflections showed that students were able to assess their own work and give feedback to their peers. For example, a grade 5 student explained why she did well by stating, "I had a chart of survival traits and found evidence to back it up then I had another paper to explain it and I put them together in an essay." A first grade child filled a bar graph to depict his progress in reading from September to January, showing he had reached level "C". A grade 2 student offered the following comment to another student based on a checklist, "Put 'on Saturday' not 'on my weekend on Saturday'. Make sentence a little clearer. Put finger spaces." Another student wrote regarding a peer, "(He) needs to fix a word. Make sentence a little clearer so I can understand it. Too many 'thens'." A grade 3 student received several comments from peers including, "(she) clearly stated opinions (and) used evidence to back them up. What (she) could have done better was to tell us why the subways were closed (and) Give a description about how bad the snow was."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders convey high expectations to staff through the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DFfT), provide professional development opportunities, and have a system of accountability for those expectations. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress.

Impact
Collaboration between all school stakeholders fosters ongoing communication of high expectations providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has provided staff with verbal and written expectations. For example, in a written memo the principal lists as expectations, implementing daily independent reading and writing, strengthening inquiry teams and parental involvement, continuing the development of units of study across subjects, and addressing students at the bottom third. To assist teachers in their work, the principal provides guidelines in such areas as the features of informative, persuasive and argumentative writing, and provides professional development in English language arts and math. These guidelines and trainings are linked to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers develop grade level instructional foci that propel grade team meetings and support the coherence of expectations throughout the grades. For example, the grade 3 instructional focus includes identifying and promoting the use of high-frequency words and academic vocabulary. Grade 5 expands on this by including dedicated time for peer conversations to make connections to materials and/or texts.

- Written feedback to teachers includes specific observations, comments, and next steps for teacher improvement, which highlight the school leaders' expectations of DFfT and the school's instructional focus which aims to promote reading comprehension and academic vocabulary through rigorous questions, tasks, and discussion. For example, one comment and suggestion reads, "Please refer to the DOK wheel to enhance your questioning strategies." Another comment reads, "It is very important to refer to the math word wall during your lessons." Still another reads, "More growth is need in allowing your students to take the lead in classroom discussions."

- Written and verbal feedback is consistently provided to families through such venues as one-on-one conferencing, letters, and phone calls. Parents spoke about workshops that informed them about the Common Core Learning Standards and classroom strategies such as word walls and productive struggles in math. They articulated knowledge about their children's progress through report cards they receive five times a year and their easy access to teachers and administrators, and online venues such as Jupiter grades, and emails to teachers. One parent said, "Staff take the time to sit down with us to see what's going on with our children."

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

Findings
Teacher teams are engaged in collaborative inquiry-based work that promotes the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards by analyzing assessment data and student work to improve teacher practice and student achievement.

Impact
Inquiry-based teacher team collaborations address the school's instructional goals through assessment of student work and data, and refinement of pedagogy, resulting in adult and student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams convene in collaborations that are structured through the use of protocols to assess student progress and strengthen teacher capacity. For example, during a middle school math team meeting that included teachers from grades 6, 7, and 8, teachers looked at grade-level curricula and pacing against data from the most recent weekly benchmark assessments. They analyzed successes and challenges, and then generated ideas to formulate an instructional approach to address the challenges. For example, when students continued to show difficulty with key terms, teachers discussed having students write all their vocabulary on index cards with the term on one side and definition on the back. Cards would also be made from 1 to 100 that contain factors on the reverse side.

- The middle school math team is structured so that the middle school math cluster teacher, who is a member of the team, provides additional targeted, coordinated support to students based on assessment results. For example, when the pacing of lessons became too compressed and teachers determined that extra time was needed to focus on various grade level areas, the cluster teacher concentrated on strengthening fluency and having students create their own problems. When a certain area is completed, the cluster teacher can also provide extensions as when the grade 7 teacher asked him to begin teaching statistics. In this way, teachers collaboratively formulate strategies to enhance each other's capacity and offer a unified instructional approach to their students. Teachers learn from each other. One teacher declared, "I used to teach equations differently, but now I learned the method my colleagues are using to teach how to solve equations."

- Teams consistently analyze data that leads to improvement in student achievement. For example, when a mid-January benchmark assessment in grade 6 showed that 15 of 26 students scored below passing, teachers designed a period of reteaching with scaffolded instruction on ratios for various groups of students. Spiraled homework assignments were also designed to address previously learned skills and the end of the month assessment showed that 21 students achieved passing grades with most students gaining an average of 11 points above their previous grade.