



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Charles A. Dorsey

Elementary School K067

**51 Saint Edwards Street
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Grace Solomon

**Date of review: February 26, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman**

The School Context

Charles A. Dorsey is an elementary school with 258 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 53% Black, 36% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.0%.

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	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	Additional Findings	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	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	Focus	Underdeveloped
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	Celebration	Developing

Area of Celebration

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

All teachers participate in professional teamwork to analyze student work and data results to make decisions that affect student learning across grades. Leadership opportunities for teachers are beginning to build capacity.

Impact

Teacher teams guide their instructional decisions based on student needs and school goals, thus building the instructional capacity of teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Weekly professional collaborations occur in grade bands such as, kindergarten through grade 2 and grades 3 through 5. A vertical team exists and is comprised of representation from all grades to monitor coherence of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional practices to support units of study from grade to grade.
- Based on student data, teachers are focused improving student progress which has them participating in more accurate data analysis and including instructional practices which support increasing academic vocabulary, close reading, and writing across the content areas.
- Teacher teams use protocols during meetings to ensure consistency between teams and structures to look at student work/data and implications to units of study and instructional practices.
- Teachers provide agendas, minutes, and next steps to school leaders to outline their plans for instruction. School leaders often attend or lead teacher team meetings lessening the impact of developing teacher leadership school-wide.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

**3.4 High
Expectations**

Rating:

Underdeveloped

Findings

The principal inconsistently communicates high expectations for teaching and learning to staff. College and career readiness expectations communicated to students and families is unclear.

Impact

Limited communication hinders the accountability for staff in meeting rigorous standards for teaching and learning. Staff and families are rarely made aware of expectations that are connected to a path of college and career preparedness resulting in a lack of appropriate feedback concerning student progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal sends a week in review to staff that highlights upcoming events, motivating statements, and noticing of classroom visits; however, rarely are there comments about the expectations based on their work with the Danielson Framework for Teaching that speaks to the expectations of teaching and learning.
- Classroom observations and feedback to teachers inconsistently communicate teacher expectations. For example, observations stated items such as “include formative assessment”, “students appear to be aware of assessment criteria” and “active engagement by most students”; however supports to achieve expectations are rarely included, thus limiting the accountability for staff in meeting expectations.
- Parents participate in biweekly meetings such as muffins for moms and doughnuts for dads and various workshops; however, parent stated rarely are they engaged in conversations that address student progress, articulation to middle school and supports to address their child’s progress.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Most of the school's curricula materials support a more rigorous program for students. The school inconsistently stresses higher order thinking skills and academic behaviors.

Impact

The school is inconsistent in providing demanding curricula in all subject areas that promote college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes Core Knowledge and Expeditionary Learning to support literacy instruction. To strengthen writing instruction the school utilizes Teachers College Reading and Writing Project units of study. Social Studies and Science are taught through the literacy block providing inconsistent content instruction in these key areas.
- The school minimally uses state and city scope and sequence to support the development of rigorous units of study in subjects such as art, physical education, and technology lessening the schools ability to provide rigorous instruction in all content areas.
- Teachers have been provided higher order thinking (HOT) skills checklists and use Depth of Knowledge Levels to gauge the types of questions included in lesson plans. Reviewed units revealed questions that required students to recall, describe, and identify were most prevalent limiting the ability of students to demonstrate higher order thinking frequently.
- The school has emphasized specific aspects of assigned tasks and the development and adjusting of units to support English Language Learners (ELL's) and Students with Disabilities (SWD's). For example, multiple representations for assignments, tiered activities within lessons, and multi-level questions to increase student discussion however, reviewed units of study were inconsistent resulting in an uneven emphasis in providing access to rigorous curricula for all learners.

Findings

While instructional practices are aligned to support the instructional shift demands of the curricula, effective teaching strategies are not consistently used across most classrooms.

Impact

Teaching practices do not regularly offer students ample opportunities to engage fully in learning tasks via multiple pathways that support them in producing quality work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school believes that students learn best when working in small groups and have the opportunities to participate in high levels of discussion based on well formulated questions. Common instructional approaches and strategies aligned to this belief system are small group instruction, critical questions, multiple opportunities for repetition, and workshop model presentations of lessons that include long practice periods. Across most classes, students engaged in taught skills for short periods of time lessening their ability to demonstrate their understanding of what has been asked.
- The Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) is utilized to measure how effective teachers' deliver lessons based on common core aligned units of study. Lesson plans reflect predetermined questions. In a grade 3 classroom, the teacher used a higher order thinking (HOT) checklist and modeled her thinking during direct instruction using informational text. While the instructional shifts have been recognized, teachers' practices remain inconsistent.
- Several lessons did not provide students with challenging academic tasks that demonstrate students' abilities to analyze or synthesize text information. Students were asked low level questions or tasks that relied more on recall than deep thinking.
- The school has focused on student discussion and engagement using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Observed student discussions were limited based on to lower-level questions as measured by the Depth of Knowledge (DoK) or Bloom's Taxonomy which are both utilized. For example, students were asked to identify characters and settings of text as well as define the meanings of unknown words. This has limited teachers in engaging students in rigorous discussion that provide multiple levels of access for students especially Students with Disabilities (SWD's).

Findings

The school's assessment practices are aligned to most of the curricula. Teachers' analysis of student data leads limited determination of progress towards school goals.

Impact

The school's use common student data limits effective feedback to teachers and students and lessens the effectiveness of modifications to curricula on the team and classroom levels.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a variety of assessments including Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) selections, pre-and post-unit tests, one demand writing samples, and running records. There are no assessments designed to measure student's content knowledge in the areas of science and social studies.
- The schools common assessment planning calendar inconsistently utilizes assessments aligned to curricula materials lessening the schools ability to determine student progress based on lessons taught.
- Several teachers create class assessments to increase their opportunities to collect further student data. Most teachers rely on school scheduled assessments limiting their ability to get a more accurate picture of students' mastery of skills.
- Teacher teams discuss student data results in order to inform student groups. Across most classrooms, student groups performed the same/similar tasks regardless of their performance on a common assessment. This results in less individualized supports based on student needs.