



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 69 Vincent D. Grippo School

Elementary School 20K069

**6302 9th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Jaynemie Capetanakis

**Date of review: November 26, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Debra R. Lamb, Ed. D.**

The School Context

P.S. 69 Vincent D. Grippo School is an elementary school with 867 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 8% Hispanic, 8% White, and 83% Asian students. The student body includes 48% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 98%.

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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

There is coherence across grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness for all students. All learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and special education students, must demonstrate their thinking. Individual and groups of students—including the lowest- and highest-achieving students, ELLs and special education students—have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, modified units of study are used that incorporate more project-based learning, reading and writing strategies like word study in the style of Teachers College, technology applications, and intervention and enrichment resources. “Our beginning step was to take what worked well with Teachers College and mix it with ReadyGEN™,” said a teacher. ReadyGEN™ is used as an umbrella to embrace Common Core-aligned text and the instructional shifts. Teachers said they like that each student has a copy of the text. They particularly like the ReadyGEN publication entitled *Sleuth*, which is a collection of short texts used in the close reading workshop. Following the “Sleuth Steps,” students draw meaning from the text, gather evidence to answer the questions being posed, ask their own questions based on the reading, make a case by building an argument using evidence gathered and the answers to the questions they asked, and prove their points by completing a performance task. Teachers appreciate the interconnectedness among GOMath!™ chapters, together with the embedded enrichment activities, math journals, and digital resources available through *Think Central*. The infusion of interactive technology, videos, and intervention strategies by teachers has enhanced the math curriculum. The school also uses the multisensory, structured Orton-Gillingham-based phonics program called Phonics In A Box®.
- Rigorous tasks are embedded within modules that require learners to demonstrate their thinking. In literacy, there are six units and twelve modules in Kindergarten through grade two, and four units and eight modules in grades three through five. Teachers look to the next grade’s standards to continuously challenge their students. Higher-order thinking and high-quality questioning is evident across classrooms. The school has embraced “grand conversations,” a term for the kind of talk that enables students to ask questions, disagree, explain their thinking, explore different perspectives, and negotiate meaning.
- Curriculum maps incorporate project-based learning as well as modifications like language supports and differentiated tasks intended to effectively address the diverse needs of general- and special-education students, many of whom are English language learners (ELLs). Performance tasks are analyzed by teachers for the purpose of creating guided reading, strategy and other student learning groups. Additionally, the school offers a challenging curriculum in visual arts, music, dance, and theater. Art teachers work closely with their colleagues to integrate the arts within curricula of other disciplines. For example, grade five students connected their study of the Underground Railroad with a performance and the making of quilts.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress towards goals across grades and subjects, to track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions. Assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

All students, including ELLs and special education students, demonstrate increased mastery. Teachers make effective curricular and instructional adjustments to meet all students' learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's assessment practices are linked to instructional rationales through the use of Informal instruments like the Burns & Roe Informal Reading Inventory (B&R IRI) to measure word recognition and comprehension, and the Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) Benchmark Assessment System to determine students' instructional and independent reading levels. Students are identified for small group instruction based on high-level, mid-level, and low-level student formative data and teacher noticings about student strengths and weaknesses. Students in grades four and five are also grouped to receive academic intervention services (AIS) if they have a low performance level on their English Language Arts (ELA) State test scores, are reading above an F&P Level "M," and are functioning on their grade level according to the B&R IRI. Students in grades two and three receive AIS based on F&P levels.
- The school uses assessments inherent in programs, such as the on-demand writing in the ReadyGEN™ modules, the checklists in Lindamood-Bell's Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language Comprehension and Thinking® program, and the Phonogram Assessment within the Phonics In A Box® program. Checks for understanding commonly used across classrooms include "thumbs up/down," exit slips, and "stop and jot" prompts as quick assessments. A variety of checklists are used by students for editing and revising. After evaluating rubrics, students self-assess and explain in writing why their work deserves the grade given. Timely and specific feedback from both teachers and through "buddy checks" provides students with clear direction. Teaching is based on the results of these formative and summative assessment practices, and chapter tests, performance tasks, and diagnostic assessments like the "Show What You Know" component of GO Math!.
- Teachers engage in a needs assessment every two months, during which they formally assess students and discuss the patterns they see. High levels of student performance and progress continues to be reflected through various culminating projects designed as performance assessment tasks. The State's 2013-2014 standardized test data reflects that school outperformed both the district and citywide results based on the number of students overall and subgroups meeting the standards on the ELA and math tests compared to both district and citywide results. The school's New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) also reflects a high proportion of ELLs who have scored in the advanced category. Teachers shared that they help students to be well prepared by giving multiple choice tests and having students practice bubbling in answers on test sheets, and focusing on essential test words, like infer and compare.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teaching practices and strategies are aligned to the curricula, reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and provide multiple entry points, high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

Impact

The school's belief system is informed by the Danielson Framework through discussions at the team and school levels. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administrators articulated their belief that student achievement will continue to improve by using small group work, higher order questioning, and discussion/grand conversation. They attribute the school's continuously high student performance and progress outcomes to the impact of the visual arts on students' cognitive, social and emotional development. Quoting Confucius, the principal stated, "I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand." Exemplars are posted in classrooms that model exemplary writing practices, such as the introduction of the character and situation, the use of temporal and transition words, the use of dialogue with vivid descriptions, the characters' experiences and feelings, and evidence of closure. Whether creating skeleton clay figures, painting murals about pond life, or creating historical newspapers, students learn through multiple entry points, research-based strategies, and project-based activities. For example, student work displayed at the end of a unit about children and schools in different countries around the world showcased how first graders visualized and acted out what children do at school in other countries, compared and contrasted different countries using Venn diagrams, created puppets of children in those countries, and recorded facts such as the forms of play, meals, clothing, and student transportation to school in the different countries studied.
- The school's instructional goals focus on improving higher order thinking skills and developing the critical thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills students need to be successful. Teachers infuse higher-order questions into their daily practice that require students to use complex skills like drawing conclusions, critiquing, analyzing, and applying concepts. Students across the school use post-its during reading to identify the main idea of the text and text-based evidence related to questions. Teachers match instructional activities to the genre, and use such strategies as including pictures with vocabulary, acting out text, using math journals so that students can organize, clarify and reflect on their thinking. Teachers also engage kids through use of manipulatives and GO Math! Grab and Go activities like mental math, geometry, and math games in mixed groups.
- Students work in flexible, heterogeneous groups on tiered activities with scaffolds and resources to support students with different learning styles and strengths. During group work, students know the routines and take control of the discussions and ownership of the projects. For example, groups of grade three students charted important details from articles read on Thanksgiving topics and then came to consensus on a main idea. "Kids are getting it...they create their own word problems and cognitively challenge one another in class," said a teacher. Through such celebrations as publishing parties, students proudly share their work with the school community.

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

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to the entire staff and provide quality training to help meet these expectations. A culture for learning exists that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

School leaders foster a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations. Communications support learning to ensure success and higher achievement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers present workshops for parents on a monthly basis and the parent coordinator conducts workshops during the school day. During the current school year, parent workshops have been conducted from September through November on such topics as “Current Math Assessment Testing,” “Understanding the Fontas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System,” “Social and Emotional Development,” and “Healthy Eating” have been conducted. Parents participate in their children’s publishing parties and other celebrations of learning during assembly programs. “It’s easy to connect with a teacher when I call the school or send a note,” said a parent. Communication between teachers and parents is two-way with appropriately translated information. There are also English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for parents held at the school. Resources like websites are shared with parents during hands-on workshops to help their children improve their English and reading skills. Speaking of their children’s teachers, parents said “They want the best for your kid.”
- Teachers said that they support college and career readiness for their students “...by instilling a love of learning. We look to the next grade’s standards to see where we can go from here. We’re always looking ahead.” Teachers try to understand the different cultures in the school so that the students will feel confident.” Through such strategies as participating in literature circles, students exercise choice in literature selection, discuss how authors create and craft quality literature, and collaborate via group discussion roles. Students take ownership of their learning by recording their responses and insights as they read and then participating in reflective discussions about literature within supportive group environments. The door of a classroom has the following message for students: “When you enter this classroom, you are...explorers, writers, scientists, respected, important, appreciated.” Two students sharing work that they were most proud of talked about their unit on explorers, during which they researched and wrote feature newspaper articles. “We could use only information like the “Northwest Passage” and “spices” from the time period of exploration studied. Students described the various roles within discussion groups played, including illustrator, editor, lifestyle correspondent, personality correspondent, science correspondent, and top news reporter.
- Through the school’s focus on positive character and constant reminders to be kind to one another, students are exposed to the academic and personal behaviors needed for success in school and in life. Problem-solving strategies like “Stop, Think, and Choose!” and “Bucket Fillers” are encouraged. Students serve as “class ambassadors” to help other students with academic and personal behaviors. Students have opportunities to serve in leadership and community service roles. Students serve on the student council and serve as members of the school’s color guard, monitors, and table leaders.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The great majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Standards, during which pedagogical practice, assessment data, and student work is analyzed. These teams continually engage in distributed leadership practices.

Impact

Effective teacher leadership and integral instructional decision-making has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, improved pedagogical practice, increased student achievement for all, and increased mastery of learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers serve on a wide range of professional collaborations and the school’s schedule supports these collaborations. Teachers also serve as mentors to their colleagues who are new to teaching. The school employs two full-time literacy and math coaches to support teacher practice. Teachers have double periods (two periods per grade) with a coach at the beginning of every lesson. As a designated “Showcase School” for its strong fine arts program, two teachers—a third grade teacher and the art teacher— serve as model teachers and share best practices with colleagues. “Were sharing resources. Every room has different strategies,” said a teacher.
- In a grade two teacher team meeting, teachers discussed the commonalities among student work samples connected to an informational text within the ReadyGEN unit on communities. A teacher stated, “As a team, we think about higher order thinking and questioning. We’re constantly assessing our kids, and then we zone in through small group instruction.” Teachers sorted the student work into high, middle, and low student groups. They noticed that the low student group needed to work on focus and common knowledge, and that the middle student group needed to work on quick facts and details. Teachers agreed that it would be important to review additional features of non-fiction with their students in the low and middle groups. Students in the high group made books and used facts, and had all the structures and words, and included a table of contents and a glossary, as well as opinions and personal stories. However students in the high group had problems with basic grammar.
- “We have a tremendous amount of trust in our staff,” said the principal. Teachers agreed that they are empowered to be creative in their teaching strategies and are given a lot of leeway to share and implement ideas.