



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Thomas S. Boyland
Elementary-Middle School K073**

**251 McDougal Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Kenya Stowe

**Date of review: March 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

Thomas S. Boyland is an elementary-middle school with a total of 101 students in grades 4, 5, and 8. The school population comprises 78% Black, 18% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. 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	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Cycles of assessments closely matched to curricula and daily checks for understanding generate feedback to staff and students about students' performance and inform adjustments to curricula and instruction that target students' needs.

Impact

Feedback from assessments results in students' awareness of their strengths and next steps and leads to targeted instructional adjustments that address their learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers implement common assessments, including Fountas and Pinnell and Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments in reading, writing, and math assessing student's proficiency and content knowledge related to varied performance tasks. There are also fall and spring benchmark exams in English language arts and math, and beginning, middle, and end of unit assessments, which along with Achieve 3000 assessments provide teachers with feedback on students' progress towards learning goals.
- Teachers use a school-wide grading policy and task-specific rubrics aligned to curricula to provide staff and students with feedback on student performance in all disciplines. Students who were interviewed noted that they get rubrics and checklists, which they use to assess their performance and the performance of their peers in class. Some work folders examined showed the students' written reflections on performance on specific tasks and what they needed to do in order to improve their performance. One student's folder showed his performance on a math end-of-unit assessment on adding and subtracting fractions, along with his reflections on "What did I do right? What did I do wrong? and What will I work on?" Teachers also reported that they engage students in "data talks" which make students aware of their strengths and gaps in learning and serve as a tool for evaluating their progress towards goals set at the start of the school year. For example, using computer generated and color coded student profiles showing achievement data in all content areas for individual students, teachers guide students in looking at changes in reading levels after each iteration of Fountas and Pinnell assessments to determine the gap, if any, between the current and targeted level shown on the document.
- Teachers use informal assessments such as conferencing, exit tickets, and quick checks via questioning to engage in real time assessment of learning during instruction. One such assessment revealed students' misconceptions about the relationship between decimals and place value. The teacher adjusted instruction by pausing group work to ask clarifying questions and modeling a correct response before advising students to continue with the task. The principal noted that she encourages teachers to use data from quick assessments to group and re-group students flexibly for small group instruction with tiered and differentiated tasks that reflect the diverse needs of students across classrooms. In addition, the principal points to student profile data for all students to show that adjustments such as greater integration of virtual manipulatives in math instruction, and consistent incorporation of sentence stems in modeling writing tasks across content areas, have contributed to improvement in many students' performance on middle and end-of-unit assessments in math and literacy.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies do not consistently incorporate rigorous tasks and multiple entry points to learning. Learning activities that support high levels of student participation in discussions are not yet evident across classrooms.

Impact

All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, inconsistently participate in challenging tasks that maximize their opportunities to demonstrate higher-order thinking and high levels of participation in peer-to-peer discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in some classrooms engaged students in challenging tasks, such as reading texts to cite evidence in response to questions within academic tasks and using academic vocabulary to explain solutions to problems. For example, in an eighth grade science class, students were asked to engage in a controlled experiment in which they developed and tested hypotheses about what happened to gummy bears when submerged in different liquids (water, vinegar, salt water, baking soda, and water). They charted the results of their findings and used scientific vocabulary to share their conclusions with the class. By contrast, students in a fourth grade English language arts class did not get to “make inferences from a text” as per the lesson plan, as the teacher read the text aloud, pausing frequently to explain what was happening. Students did not get time to do the planned independent task of reading their text, *Journeys*, to “make two inferences about Owen”, a character they were reading about.
- Tasks and lessons facilitated student participation, sustained student-to-student dialogue and student-generated questions of high cognitive challenge, in some classrooms visited. For example, in a social studies class, the teacher used questioning to evoke peer-to-peer questioning and discussion as students worked in groups or with partners, reading an article “Jamestown as the First English Settlement in America”, to take a position on whether we should “celebrate our nation’s history even if it takes a lot of time and money”. This practice of inviting students to engage in peer-to-peer discussions about content read was not evident in some of the other classrooms visited. In one case, after presenting content about safety rules and fitness plans, the science teacher for a group of fifth grade students with disabilities, gave them a worksheet with suggested activities to develop their own fitness plan but then kept talking about what goes in a fitness plan. Students were not given much time to share ideas with peers or use the worksheet to do the task.
- Lessons in some classrooms offered students multiple points of entry to the task. In a fourth grade art class the teacher asked students about 3D movies seen to support a discussion of how lines and shapes help to create optical illusions. After modeling how to use lines, shapes, and colors to create an optical illusion, the teacher distributed a paper with varied configurations of lines and asked students to use it to create their own illustration of an optical illusion. Students chose their own pathway to completing the task, coloring their drawing while engaging in sharing of observations with peers. However in other classrooms, all students worked on the same task with no variations for diverse learners. This was noted in a fifth grade math class where all students spent 15 minutes working on the same problem. Those who finished quickly were not given an additional task.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses student work and data to develop and revise curricula, with targeted focus on alignment of units of study to content and Common Core standards and instructional shifts.

Impact

Across disciplines, curricula reflect a targeted focus on ensuring that all students have access to tasks that support college and career readiness goals and expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- For English language arts instruction, the school uses Common Core aligned curricula such as Journeys for grades 4 and 5 and Holt McDougal Literature for grade 8. Math instruction is supported by Envision Math for grades 4 and 5 and Go Math for grade 8. The New York State science and social studies scope and sequence documents guide curriculum development and instruction in science and social studies for all students. Although these materials are Common Core aligned, using an Analyzing Student Work protocol, teachers meet during professional development cycles to examine student work products and engage in an assessment of gaps in student learning as related to the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, one teacher noted that gap analysis of student writing samples resulted in the inclusion of guided writing frames and other graphic organizers to improve sentence structure in students' essays.
- The principal explained that teachers use a Rigorous Curriculum Design (RCD) Framework for modifying units and tasks to deepen alignment of curricula to Common Core Standards and the instructional shifts. For example, curriculum maps show teachers' use of the "RCD Unit Planning Organizer" to chart links between Common Core Standards, related concepts, skills, essential questions, big ideas, content vocabulary, instructional resources, text-based learning activities, performance tasks aligned to Depth of Knowledge constructs, and questions correlated to standardized assessments. The maps also show explicit strategies for differentiated instruction.
- The school's curricula incorporate specific instructional materials for English language learners and students with disabilities, such as interactive Smart Board activities and technology based programs such as I-Ready and Achieve 3000. In addition, the principal described teachers' use of Universal Design Learning strategies to further support all students' access to standards-based tasks that accelerate their readiness for the next grade. For example, "The Human Animal" science unit for grade 8 has recommendations for one-to-one and small group conferencing and use of websites to support all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in writing a research report on "how the lymphatic system works with the cardiovascular system".
- Curricula also includes coverage of content linked to college and career readiness skills for students to master as they move from grade to grade. For example, based on a College is our Core theme and a College is at Our Core bulletin board, there are tasks that require students to explore career interests and cite skills needed for success in college and beyond. There are also tasks linked to trips to colleges and a college and career week, which require students to engage in independent research and multi-media presentations.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The principal communicates high expectations to all staff and provides training to support them in meeting those expectations. All staff members communicate high expectations to families and provide feedback that informs them about their children's progress towards the expectations.

Impact

All teachers are aware of and receive varied supports that help them to meet the high expectations placed upon them. Families understand expectations for their children and how they can help their children make progress towards learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- A staff handbook, lesson and unit plan templates, along with various memoranda and the staff edition of the school newspaper, *The Greatness Gazette*, are used to communicate the school's high expectations for all staff. For example, instructional memoranda explicitly state expectations such as high levels of student engagement in lessons, use of questions and tasks that promote critical thinking, learning activities that are differentiated and linked to real world experiences, engagement of all students in accountable talk, and ongoing use of assessments to monitor students' progress. Teachers reported that administrators use classroom visits, reviews of unit and lesson plans, and analysis of student work and assessment data to hold them accountable for meeting expectations. The administrators provide explicit next steps and follow up to view implementation of the recommended actions such as requests for "pre-planned questions in lesson plans" to support "ongoing checks for understanding".
- The school's professional development plan indicates that all teachers receive ongoing training in both planning and delivering instruction to affect school-wide improvement in student achievement. For example, along with training in topics such as effective questioning and using assessment in instruction, teachers participate in cycles of instructional rounds where they use the Danielson's Framework for Teaching to focus on a specific competency such as "Engaging Students in Learning", as they critique a lesson taught by a peer. Using a debriefing protocol teachers provide colleagues with feedback on strengths and weaknesses observed during lessons and suggest next steps linked to the targeted component of the Danielson Framework, to improve the teacher's practice.
- A family handbook, parent edition of the school newspaper, bulletins, events calendars, phone calls, messages on the school's website, monthly workshops, and "Coffee with the Principal", Parent Teacher Association, and School Leadership Team meetings convey the school's high expectations for students to all families and offer tips to help families support their children in learning at home. Quarterly report cards, progress reports that are sent home in January and April and Engrade, an online data portal that shows students' grades for work across disciplines, also keep families abreast of school expectations and their children's progress in meeting them. In addition, the principal shared that parents are well informed about college and career readiness skills for students and actively engage in school activities that help their children develop targeted skills, such as perseverance, excellence, knowledge, good citizenship and support of self and others. Some families stated that the school's "College is our Core" activities and Learning Leaders program, which allows families to volunteer in classrooms or serve as tutors and chaperones on trips, further inform them about college and career readiness goals for their children.

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

Cycles of professional collaborations provide all staff members with structured opportunities to share content knowledge and strategies for improving teaching and learning across the school. Distributed leadership practices promote teacher leadership and result in staff members having a voice in decisions about school improvement goals and initiatives.

Impact

The inclusion of all staff in a variety of teams empowers all teachers to work collaboratively towards the attainment of school-wide goals and contribute ideas for school improvement, with emphasis on improved teacher practice and successful implementation of Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are programmed for cycles of team professional development activities which include two to three periods of common planning for grade teams, participation of teams in instructional rounds, focused professional development on high priority topics, and inquiry work to improve achievement by all students. For example, at the core inquiry team meeting observed, teachers used the Analyzing Student Work Protocol, to engage in gap analysis to assess the rigor of a task done by a fifth grade student and the extent to which the work met the expectations of the Common Core Standards. The task required students to research a favorite invention and write an essay stating the invention, why it was chosen, facts about the inventor, and how the invention has impacted their lives and that of others. Team members shared ideas about how to improve a student’s essay about the invention of laptops by Charles Babbage. Suggested next steps included re-framing the task into small steps, using organizers such as a T-chart for collecting facts about the inventor/invention, and a writing frame to show essay organization (introduction, body, conclusion) based on the rubric which they had designed to assess the task, and as part of the unit plan.
- The school’s professional development calendar and grade team meeting notes show that team meetings cycle through activities that build teacher capacity to address school goals such as rigorous Common Core aligned tasks and assessments, and lesson plans and units that reflect alignment to the standards and instructional shifts. During the “inquiry cycle” teachers examine data from monthly school-wide assessments and create data reports that highlight students’ strengths and gaps in learning based on the skills assessed. The “instructional rounds cycle” involves peer visitations, which help to improve their pedagogy. The “common planning cycle” allows for targeted focus on lesson and unit planning and the “professional development cycle” offers content specific strategies to improve instruction.
- Teachers identified as instructional leaders serve as grade leaders and/or members of teams such as the instructional core team and core inquiry team. The core inquiry team comprised of teachers, administrators and a data specialist meets monthly to analyze data from all school-wide assessments. The instructional core team comprised of grade leaders across content areas meets monthly to refine curricula, conduct learning walks and plan next steps to improve teacher capacity in relation to the Danielson Framework. According to the principal, these teacher leaders are “mentors and critical friends” for their peers, representing teacher voice in meetings with administrators and facilitating professional development activities that strengthen teacher practice, as evidenced by improved student performance across iterations of assessments in English language arts and math to date.