



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**The Albany School**

**Elementary School K091**

**532 Albany Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Tessa Alleyne**

**Date of review: March 5, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Shenean N. Lindsay**

## The School Context

PS 91 is an elementary school with 429 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 91% Black and 7% Hispanic students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Teachers use common assessments, student work, and checks for understanding across classrooms to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas and adjust instructional decisions at the classroom and team level.

### Impact

Teachers use ongoing checks for understanding and deliver actionable feedback thus making effective adjustments to curricula and instruction which meet the learning needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- There is evidence of a school-wide grading policy which is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Across grades and content areas, rubrics are aligned to the school's grading policy. Students articulated they know what is expected as a result of rubrics which are explained by teachers. Teachers also conference with students to discuss what they do well and next steps using rubrics. Teachers also articulated the importance of conferencing with students.
- The school utilizes pre, mid, and post-unit assessments to monitor student progress. Weekly assessments in vocabulary are created by the teachers. Students also receive bi-weekly assessments in science and social studies aligned to units of study. Pre and post-tests aligned to literacy and math units are administered to students. For example, a Go Math Data Plan was created and analyzed for the third grade by the teacher team. Teachers analyzed results of the Beginning of the Year assessment and set middle/end year goals. Thus, there are three tiers of students who have different activities/supports for enrichment/growth.
- Adjustments to instruction are made based on assessment strategies such as *Questioning and Discussion* as well as *Share and Show* which is used to demonstrate mastery of standards within a unit. For example, in a fourth grade math class, students used the *Stop Light* method in which red, yellow, and green cups are used to indicate whether or not they understand a task. The teacher assessed the students' needs based on the color of their cups. The teacher then adjusted the groups which resulted in all students receiving extra help or enrichment.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders have created a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all constituents, provides professional development opportunities for staff and college and career readiness skills for students, fostering a culture of high expectations for all members of the school community.

### Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations result in effective academic and personal growth of students and adults, however, parents require more supports in understanding Common Core Learning Standards. Consistent communication and ongoing professional learning and coaching opportunities have resulted in teachers' awareness of the school's expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal arranges weekly professional learning opportunities and one-on-one support with school based coaches aligned to specific Danielson Framework for Teaching domains that aid and address individual teacher's pedagogical needs. Follow-up from the principal consists of daily visits to classrooms to monitor that feedback is being implemented in a timely fashion.
- During interviews with members of the teacher team, teachers stated they hold one another accountable through inter-visitations and sharing of best practice. They also maintain peer support logs in which colleagues provide evidence of actionable feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers said they value feedback from their peers and make adjustments based on findings from classroom visits. Feedback on teacher observations show communication from the principal which indicates next steps or tools for reflection such as *Five Powerful Questions* which teachers can use to craft higher order questions when lesson planning. Additionally, the principal requires all teachers who engage in inter-visitations to list three strategies learned and then implement the strategies learned into their lessons.
- There is a culture for learning in which high expectations are communicated through student conferencing, progress reports in between report cards, rubric based feedback, and peer tutoring. As a result, students receive guidance and support which will help them achieve the next level. However, during parent interviews, many were unclear of expectations for students as a result of Common Core Learning Standards implementation. One parent stated, "It is expected that kids learn the same thing. They should be able to fit in the same grade in any state."

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and teachers effectively align curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and ensure the integration of the instructional shifts. Across the school, teachers utilize student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks.

### Impact

The school uses curricula that ensures coherence across the grades and a focus on college and career readiness skills for all students. The planning and refinement of units and academic tasks based on students' specific needs has provided access to learning opportunities in which they are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school subscribes to curricula such as Engage NY, Expeditionary Learning, Core Knowledge, and Go Math. Lesson plans include tasks that integrate the instructional shifts such as use of higher level vocabulary (Vocabulary Essentials), solving multi-step problems, engaging in close reading strategies, use of Notice/Wonder Note Catcher sheets to collect text based evidence when responding to questions and developing higher order thinking (HOT) questions through activities.
- Teachers meet weekly in vertical and horizontal teams to examine units of study, design tiered questions based on Depth of Knowledge and create varied tasks to provide multiple entry points for all students. Additionally, tasks are designed to match the learning style of all students such as auditory, visual, and kinesthetic. For example, a review of the fifth grade curriculum indicates culminating activities such as trips to the United Nations, Brooklyn Botanical Garden, and a host of others. During interviews, students stated they go on field trips to further understanding of what they are learning in school.
- A review of teacher team agendas and minutes revealed that teacher teams meet during structured weekly meetings to review student work products and adjust units of study. For example, a fifth grade teacher team member stated during teacher interviews that she reviewed student work products from Go Math and adjusted a unit of study by including scaffolds to ensure all learners have access to the lesson through use of graphic organizers and technology to support all learners. The adjustment was observed while reviewing school-wide curriculum and teacher lesson plans.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

There is a school-wide philosophy based on how students learn best that is informed by the Common Core instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### **Impact**

Across classrooms, teacher practice reflects a coherent set of beliefs in how students learn best, and teaching practices to improve students' outcomes. All learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and reflect high levels of student thinking and participation as demonstrated by meaningful student work products.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- High levels of student-to-student discussion were observed across classrooms. For example, during a math lesson on symmetry, after modeling a few examples, the teacher asked the students to fold a sheet of paper diagonally and then turn and talk to a partner in response to whether or not it had a line of symmetry. While this was taking place, the teacher listened to students, took notes on their responses, and then asked several pairs to share out.
- Across classrooms, there was evidence of multiple entry points for all learners. For example, in a second grade class, a teacher and two paraprofessionals engaged the students in a Gallery Walk. Charts were posted throughout the classroom posing questions about various types of communities. Higher order vocabulary words were noted on the chart. Students were able to choose which questions they wanted to work on. However, students selected based on their ability. As students walked around to various charts, the teacher and paraprofessional wrote down student responses. Students were assessed using Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down. After the gallery walk, students were given a rubric for Informational Writing and told to write about what they saw.
- Students in a fifth grade class watched a video based on their Unit of Study- Wildlife. Then, they were asked to identify unfamiliar words heard during the video. Students worked in groups to determine the definition, which afforded an opportunity for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities to learn new vocabulary words.
- During a fourth grade lesson, two teachers walked around the classroom observing students working in groups. A few minutes later, the teachers asked students to select a red, yellow, or green counter to indicate their understanding of the lesson. The students selected counters and went into their respective groups. Students with red counters had an opportunity to engage in a reteach of the lesson with one teacher. Students with green counters were assigned a task of identifying quadrilaterals within a diagram. Students with yellow counters had to classify quadrilaterals in different ways. As a result, all students were engaged with appropriate supports and extensions.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across the school, teacher teams consistently meet to analyze assessment data and student work products and to share teaching strategies. Teacher leaders also work collaboratively with school leaders to make curricula and instructional revisions.

### **Impact**

The work of teacher teams has led to increased collaboration, sharing of best practice, and improved pedagogy. The teachers also have a voice in key decisions which impact student learning school-wide.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including agendas, tuning protocols, minutes, and supplemental materials which support progress toward improvement of pedagogy. The focus of these meetings has been increasing student achievement through refinement of curricula and assessments. As a result of using protocols such as Gap Analysis: Looking at Student Work, teachers discovered that fourth grade students had an issue when writing paragraphs. Teachers shifted strategies, providing students with graphic organizers and writing paper options. As a result, students were better able to add details to their paragraphs.
- Lead teachers are included in the instructional cabinet, which meets once a week; they determine the instructional focus and professional development for teachers. For example, the teacher team is focused on writing across the content areas. They review student work, the standards students should be meeting, and complete a Gap Analysis Protocol to ensure student learning is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards.
- The lead teacher sets the agenda for teacher team meeting, maintains documents, facilitates the meeting, and discusses concerns with administration during instructional cabinet meetings. Teachers also take turns facilitating each meeting. Additionally, teachers and coaches engage in learning walks to observe one another, and then share feedback which results in improved instruction. For example, during an interview with the teacher team, it was stated, "Teachers readily visit one another. There is more collaboration and team work, we go to the coaches, we go to our peers, and then we go to the principal."