



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 97 The Highlawn School

Elementary School K097

**1855 Stillwell Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Irina Cabello

**Date of review: February 26, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola**

The School Context

The Highlawn School is an elementary school with 828 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 20% Hispanic, 30% White, and 49% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.4%.

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	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	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	Celebration	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

High expectations are systematically communicated to the entire school community including teachers, students and parents. The school provides professional development, parent workshops and teacher feedback to students and parents..

Impact

Structures that support high expectations across all constituencies result in a culture of mutual trust and accountability between faculty and administration a partnership between the school and families promoting an environment where all students have ownership over their educational experiences and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Articulation of high expectations frame the principal's vision that P.S. 97 is a place that provides opportunities for academic excellence through superior teaching practices that align to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. At the heart of the principal's message is that every adult needs to support the social-emotional growth of students as well as their academic progress. Professional development supports key elements of instruction including the use of data to plan for the needs of individual students, using questioning and discussion to increase student engagement and opportunities for critical thinking, forums for teachers to collaborate and share best practices as well as opportunities for teachers to expand their capacity to address the emotional needs of students. For example, as students prepare to articulate to middle school, teachers embed skills and attributes necessary for success, including independent note taking, organization and time management. Frequent classroom observations, effective feedback to teachers, peer inter-visitiation and inquiry teamwork reinforce school-wide expectations resulting in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations
- Regularly scheduled parent workshops promote active engagement by parents in their children's education, including detailed explanations of the Common Core Learning Standards by grade with explanations of specific strategies that parents can use to help their children succeed. For example, a 3rd grade parent explains, "I was given concrete things to do, like making sure my child reads a certain amount each night to improve stamina and to make time to discuss the reading with him to gauge comprehension. I talk to the teacher about what is happening at home and how it is affecting him in school." The principal hosts a monthly breakfast with parents that provides a venue for conversations that result in the building of strong relationships where parents feel they are welcomed to partner in their children's education
- English classes for parents provides access to the school for those that do not speak English, building a sense of trust and comfort for families new to the country. The number of parents participating in the program has doubled and participation at other school events is growing with a 30% increase in the number of families attending resulting in an understanding by students that, "our parents know what is going on in school and make sure we do what is necessary to make progress and meet our goals."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While the use of common assessments to track progress toward school-wide goals, adjust curriculum and instructional practices and provide feedback to students is evident, the school as a whole is building its practice to ensure that data is used to deeply understand outcomes of all students.. The school is building its processes toward using the information garnered to provide actionable and meaningful feedback to all students to allow for demonstration of mastery of standards.

Impact

Although assessments provide students with next steps, the manner that feedback is given is not sufficiently meaningful to guide students toward mastery of the standards. Adjustments to curricula following data analysis as yet do not provide the needed modifications for English language learners and students with special needs to ensure that they have access to content and opportunities to demonstrate progress toward reaching learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Assessments and tasks align to the Common Core Learning Standards and include rubrics to define expectations for students. Feedback to students, although actionable, with comments such as add more details, focus on the use of transition words and next time check spelling, does not consistently align to the standard being assessed allowing for clarity on how students can move to the next level toward mastery of standards
- Common assessments including Teachers' College Reading Assessment, Writing Assessments and Go Math pre and post unit exams provide teachers with data that is used for grouping and to identify students in need of Academic Intervention Services.
- Item analysis in grades 3-5 of Go Math assessments highlight trends in student performance and allows for adjustment to curriculum and instructional decisions. Teachers use this data to inform topics that require re-teaching however, it is not evident in all classrooms how this data is being used to specifically plan for the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities to ensure that all students have opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the content.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has created curricula across all content areas aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and embedded tasks and activities that consistently promote higher order skills for all students.

Impact

Purposeful focus on developing curricula that incorporates the instructional shifts is building coherence across classrooms in embedding rigorous habits and higher-order skills that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Units of study across content areas integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Planned activities require students to engage in multi-step problem solving, argumentative writing, text-based response, and content specific vocabulary. A 5th grade unit focuses on the big idea that “Nature Deserves Respect.” Students engage in readings that support the overall theme of the unit and culminates in a research task where student groups create a persuasive argument concerning saving the Everglades.
- Unit plans and lesson plans across grades articulate academic tasks with access points to meet the needs of all learners. For example, some planning documents incorporate the use of visual aids, tiered vocabulary, graphic organizers, sentence strips, and leveled text to provide access to all students, but application of scaffolds is not embedded to the extent that all students, including students with disabilities, and English language learners can demonstrate their thinking within planned tasks consistently.
- Units of study across grades and content areas are building coherence in the development of how tasks are being planned to allow students to demonstrate learning. For instance, a 3rd grade math unit sets forth an inquiry process for students to discover the meaning of fractions embedding a writing task that requires them to document their thinking throughout the inquiry process. Students have multiple opportunities to share their thinking orally to the class as well, thereby developing skills to communicate ideas)

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Pedagogy in the vast majority of classrooms demonstrates instructional coherence and student work products that reflects high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

The instructional practice across all classrooms is representative of the schools belief in how students learn best. All learners are engaged in activities and tasks that promote higher order thinking resulting in student work that is demonstrative of rigor, high levels of student cognition and student ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout the school there is a consistent belief that students learn best when they engage in activities that provide opportunities for independence as well as high levels of questioning and discussion. In all classes visited, lessons were framed in a work-shop model where teachers provide direct instruction and modelling, followed by independent and/or group tasks that allowed for students to participate in meaningful discussions and demonstration of critical thinking skills. For example, in a 1st grade science class, after the teacher worked with the class as a whole on how to observe the reaction of mixing something with a liquid, students worked in groups mixing solid matter in liquid matter, discussing their observations and recording their findings.
- Teaching practice is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the instructional shifts and team discussions. For example, in a 3rd grade class, students demonstrated high-level discussion and critical thinking when they created math problems involving using fractions to create and name parts of a group. After studying frequency charts and engaging in group “math talk” around the meaning of the numbers and the fractions on the chart, students created their own charts and a series of questions that were given to their group partners to answer. Students productively struggled with the task using content vocabulary and mathematical principals to support their answers.
- Student work portfolios, classrooms, bulletin boards and notebooks show tasks that provide students with opportunities to engage in cognitively challenging activities that develop critical thinking skills. In a 4th grade classroom students were actively engaging in analyzing portions of the text *Hercules’ Quest*, as they independently created both literal and inferential questions then came together in groups to discuss each other’s questions. Students were actively engaging in meaningful discussion toward answering challenging questions as they attempted to make meaning of the text.

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

Teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations that strengthen instructional capacity, promote implementation of the Common Core learning standards and embed processes that allow teachers to have a voice in decisions about curricula and teaching practice

Impact

The work produced by the teacher teams result in school-wide instructional coherence that is strengthening the instructional capacity for teachers, and providing opportunities for distributed leadership that affect learning throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Inquiry teams across grades disaggregate data from multiple sources, including Teachers' College Reading assessment, Go Math Assessments, conference notes, pre and post unit assessments and writing tasks to understand trends across grades and subject areas. Planning documents, such as unit plans, lesson plans, team minutes and Individualized Education Plans show changes that align to data. For example, unit plans across grades in mathematics show modifications based upon data that articulates a need for more focus on multi-step problem solving skills resulting in 80% of students demonstrating improving performance in answering multi-step questions. .
- Teachers collaboratively plan and design curriculum maps, units of study, and lesson plans that reflect alignment to the Common Core and the instructional shifts in all subject areas and grades. Unit plans show evidence of challenging tasks that promote critical thinking skills and allow for demonstration of learning using text based evidence. Student outcomes are increasing with most students moving at least one rubric level on performance assessments in writing
- Teacher leaders collaborate with administrators in creating and implementing a professional development plan, receive support in building leadership and facilitative skills, and are being empowered to have a voice in school decision making. During a conversation with teachers, they articulated that they felt they have a growing role in identifying school-wide trends, leading professional development by sharing best practices and offering input into crucial school-wide decisions that include curricula revision, use of resources, and implementing strategies that expand opportunities for students.