



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Lefferts Park

Elementary School K112

**7115 15th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11228**

Principal: Louise Alfano

**Date of review: March 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

The School Context

Lefferts Park is an elementary school with 530 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 0% Black, 29% Hispanic, 27% White, and 44% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 18% 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 95.0%.

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	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 the content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts while emphasizing higher order skills in academic tasks.

Impact

There is coherence across grades and subjects. All students have a range of opportunities to both build skill as well as dig deeply into important topics. The curriculum ensures that students are engaged in challenging tasks that require them to think, reflect and problem solve.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams have at least two common planning periods per week to ensure that curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and is cohesive across classrooms and grades. Student assessments drive planning and instruction. Teachers analyze data, plan, revise and adjust unit plans according to results. Administration meets monthly with teams to discuss units and identify next steps.
- Professional development work with a consultant has supported their work with unpacking standards and prioritizing standards across grades. Teachers are more familiar with the grade expectations which have led to a deeper understanding of what students need to know and be able to do. The curriculum addresses these skills and strategies and engages students in rigorous tasks and higher order thinking.
- Higher level thinking skills are promoted through learning tasks. All lessons follow the workshop model of instruction. Students have time to independently practice what is modeled and taught. *Go Math* lessons focus on problem solving and writing about mathematics. The Problem of the Day is incorporated to provide a spiral for math concepts that need strengthening.
- The Independent Investigation Methods (IIM) process is used across all grade levels and engages students in research skills as they learn how to be an investigator and make discoveries. They also learn organization skills and learn how to think based on high level questions. Students choose a topic, goal set, research, organize their notes, evaluate their goals, and present their work. The entire process relates back to the essential question in the unit.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

A variety of assessment tools are used to create clear portraits of students' strengths and challenges that supports the processes of individualizing instruction to meet student needs. The school continues to prioritize using checks for understanding to make effective adjustments.

Impact

Assessments provide teachers with a portrait of student progress towards goals and inform decisions in adjusting curricula and giving meaningful feedback to students. Peer feedback and self-assessment by students was evident and consistent across the school. The school is continuing to deepen practices to track progress and adjust instructional decisions to increase mastery of English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers evaluate the progress, effectiveness and impact of the daily close reading sessions and reading workshops by analyzing the data from running records, genre tests, reading comprehension conferences, and observations during class and group work. This information is used to plan for mini lessons, strategy groups and interventions. Close reading short responses and monthly extended response further inform planning. Small group instructional strategies are selected for literacy units based on data results.
- *Go Math* pre-tests are administered prior to beginning each unit to support appropriate planning of lessons. End of unit assessments in *Go Math* and performance tasks are used to evaluate progress. A problem of the day is planned using post test results. Rubrics are used to evaluate and ensure rigor and alignment to standards.
- Exemplar performance tasks are incorporated into the *Go Math* monthly unit assessments. Students also self-assess using rubrics to evaluate their work on math Exemplar tasks.
- A Response to Intervention spreadsheet is maintained on all at-risk students and includes Tier 1 and 2 interventions, and follow-ups. This is used to monitor student progress. Data has confirmed that the majority of targeted students have made gains since September as measured by running records and performance-based assessments.
- Teachers give meaningful feedback to students which include next steps for growth and a student self-reflection. During the student meeting, the students were able to articulate their learning goals and what they needed to do to improve. One student said she needed to elaborate and provide more evidence to support her claims when responding to a persuasive writing prompt.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher pedagogy promotes multiple entry points and high levels of student engagement. Every classroom demonstrates meaningful ways in which different students could access complex ideas or concepts.

Impact

Effective questioning and teaching practices provide all students access to challenging curricula, extend their higher order thinking skills, and promote rigor and ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- A focus on Danielson component 3b: Questioning and Discussion, has strongly supported the development of teachers questioning and discussion techniques as evidenced during classroom visits. Teachers used a variety of high level text dependent questions to challenge student thinking. The students engaged in accountable talk discussions and used text evidence to support their claims. Students were given challenge questions in the math lesson which included “How many more people would need to be surveyed to have the total number of people surveyed to be 28?”
- In math, Exemplar performance tasks are implemented weekly. The tasks require students to demonstrate their ability to construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others. In classrooms, students were engaged in problem solving and demonstrated their ability to model with mathematics and construct viable arguments. They also critiqued each other’s reasoning and gave each other meaningful feedback.
- The reading lesson observed had a clear teaching point which stated “Good Readers support the main idea by using key details in the text”. The teacher modeled by reading a section from the book *Seahorses* and doing a think aloud to share her noticing. Students then participated in an active involvement where they had the opportunity to try it on their own with support before going off to work independently in their own nonfiction book. The lesson included modifications for English language learners and students with special needs. This included vocabulary development, small group instruction, using another big book with pictures and an additional handout to scaffold the assignment.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school's deeply embedded, holistic approach to supporting students and its commitment to perpetuating a democratic community results in a high degree of efficacy among students and staff. The staff is committed to rigorous instruction as well as high expectations for all students.

Impact

The school has a unified set of high expectations and has developed strong relationships and partnerships with families to support students' progress toward student independence and ownership of their learning. This ensures that college and career readiness skills are developed.

Supporting Evidence

- The school culture promotes high expectations in many ways. In classrooms, through the use of the workshop model of instruction teachers enable students to work independently and organize their time and effort effectively. Partner and group work support collaboration and effective communication skills. Through the use of rubrics, students gain knowledge of their personal strengths as well as steps for improvement.
- Student commitments to educational goals are recognized through "student of the month" and "Honor Roll" which are effort-based systems with clearly defined criteria. All students are required to complete an application in order to be considered for selection in school activity.
- Teachers said that there is a clear vision and clear expectations based on Danielson Framework for Teaching. The principal gives effective feedback and support to teachers to maintain the school's high expectations for teaching and learning. The Danielson Framework builds a shared understanding of this culture by identifying highly effective practices. The principal has identified the expectations with a focus on Engaging Students in Learning (3c) Using Questioning & Discussion Techniques (3b) and Using Assessment in Instruction (3d). Professional development supports teachers in these areas.
- There are strong partnerships with parents. Parents said that their children are encouraged to do their best and expectations for learning are continuously communicated. Monthly curriculum letters and workshops inform parents of current units of study and ways they can support their child at home. In addition to report cards, parents receive three student progress reports. They also said their children's college and career readiness skills are reinforced through tasks that require them to research topics, cite evidence from different sources and do power point presentations.
- The IIM units include goal-setting and self-reflection. Through this model, students are engaged in high level research projects with clear expectations for their presentations that require a variety of skills.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations and participates in grade level team meetings to ensure curriculum coherence. Teachers use protocols to analyze classroom practice, assessment data and student work with a focus on accelerating the learning of all students.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved teacher pedagogy and student progress on assessments. The current level of curricular coherence is due to the work of these teams.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal messages that the work of teacher teams is integral to the achievement of students and to the cohesiveness of instruction across grades. The principal's observation data has shown an increase in teachers rated effective and highly effective in questioning and discussion.
- Teachers are given time to work with their grade level colleagues to share ideas and plan. Teams meet regularly to analyze student work, refine units of study, lesson plan, create rubrics and reflect on practice. Grade leaders and instructional team members take lead roles in these meetings while facilitating them. Teachers stated that they are committed to this work and share accountability for student growth.
- The instructional team are engaged in a book study of "Falling in Love with Close Reading" and participated in on-line professional development and tried out strategies in their classrooms. These strategies were shared across the school to support the instructional focus on close reading.
- The 4th grade team meeting agenda was an analysis of *Go Math* Unit 9 student data. Teachers discussed common trends amongst student errors, chose questions for the Problem of the Day and selected a day for re-teaching concepts students had difficulty with according to data. Next step was to discuss math tasks and which lessons to replace based on student data results. This on-going process has led to gains on math unit tests. Students have increased their problem solving skills with multiple strategies and content understanding.
- Teacher teams have also had a positive impact on teacher pedagogy and lesson planning. This has resulted in gains in student reading levels as noted by running record data and performance-based assessments in English language arts.