



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 115 Daniel Mucatel School

Elementary School K115

**1500 East 92 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Loren Borgese

**Date of review: November 25, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins**

The School Context

Daniel Mucatel School is an elementary school with 1174 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 86% Black, 7% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

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	Additional Findings	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

School leaders and staff communicate high expectations through varied partnership with parents that connect students and families to college and career paths. A nurturing school culture effectively provides support and guidance to all learners.

Impact

The active involvement and ownership of students and families in the educational process through clearly articulated expectations prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents are provided with opportunities to engage in self-growth and constructive adult learning experiences. The school offers programs such as Parent Corps; a family-centered, school based preventative intervention that fosters healthy development of school success among young children, General Educational Development (GED) classes, and English as a second language instruction to help parents with their education toward increasing their support for student achievement.
- Parents spoke to how they attend Saturday workshops at Columbia Teachers College to better equip themselves in helping their children meet literacy expectations aligned with Common Core Learning Standards. A computer technology program also affords additional support to parents as a partner in the learning process, particularly in acquiring basic understanding of computer functions to assist children in their development and use of 21st century tools necessary for college and beyond.
- The Elementary Schools Quality Snapshot indicates the school received a rating of excellent for clearly communicated high expectations to students and staff. College and career readiness initiatives, as parents described, are a strong element of school culture. The school commands high expectations for students as early as pre-k so students can demonstrate fluent knowledge of colors, shapes, letters and math thinking before entering kindergarten. A focus on public speaking, number operation skills, assignments requiring detailed writing and the use of the internet as well as astral classes on each grade develop a strong, intellectual foundation for future successes.
- Students convincingly explain that teachers are invested in their learning and hold high expectations for their progress as evidenced in their accounts about what happens in classrooms. For example, students stated that teachers want what is best for them so they receive hard work, teachers “push” them and use quotes to motivate them. In addition, teachers use the Teacher’s College reading and writing workshop model to bolster improvements in literacy for all students. Students report teachers expect them to use strategies, get good grades, and go to college.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best embedded in instructional shifts, aligned to curricula and the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Missed opportunities to engage all learners in challenging tasks, student-centered discussions, and extended learning activities result in uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Although in most classrooms visited, there was evidence of clear teaching points and students working collaboratively in small groups or partnerships, not all students were given opportunity to explain their thinking or benefit from discussion of challenges and strategies that facilitate access to complex skills and ideas. For example, students in a first grade classroom read texts well matched to individual reading levels about life long ago and used a T-chart to compare details to present day life. Nevertheless, the absence of a mid-lesson interruption to ensure all learners were appropriately engaged hampered high-level engagement for some students. As observed in a fifth grade social studies lesson on early United States government policy, students read articles to defend claims using the skill of cause and effect to cite details. However, teaching strategies did not extend lessons to maximize higher order thinking through student engagement and participation in tasks to accelerate their learning. Therefore, students complete assigned tasks and read independently due to a lack of these extensions to lessons to expand their thinking.
- School leaders expect students to engage in productive “debate and discussions in a caring learning environment where children are safe, take risks, and have voice.” The school’s focus on Danielson’s Domain 2 is evident in teacher interactions with students, which include students working cooperatively in groups and in partnerships. Nevertheless, questioning and discussion techniques to elicit rich discussion generated from students’ responses and reflection on learning is uneven across classrooms. While in a fifth grade math classroom students were asked, “Which part did you find challenging?” and in a second grade math lesson students were asked to share “something that was tricky”, opportunity for students to respond to their peer’s admissions did not occur. The teacher made comment. Consequently, there are inconsistencies in use of questioning techniques to maximize student thinking and participation across content and grade levels.
- Across classrooms, teachers implement a mini-lesson, guided practice, and independent work tasks associated with grade level learning standards and in keeping with the school’s instructional foci. This practice of utilizing a workshop model was consistently observed during classroom visits. However, multiple entry points, outside of varied graphic organizers, were not present in six out of seven classrooms visited. Planned differentiated activities in a self-contained classroom afforded opportunity for students to access learning through visual, tactile and, auditory modes. Students worked on independent tasks: using pencil and paper; at a community table with technology-based activities; received direct-teaching instruction using wipe-off boards and markers. However, as evident in this classroom, tasks at varying levels of difficulty supported by materials and measures that address learning styles have not yet matured in all classrooms.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula across grades and classrooms align with Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Academic tasks, inclusive of all learners, promote rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions support the integration of cross-curricular connections and targets key standards aimed at college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers College Reading and Writing maps complement the ReadyGen literacy program used across grades. Lesson plans across content areas reflect cross-curricular connections in social studies and science. Foundations in kindergarten through grade three and Spotlight on Literacy in grades four and five supplement guided reading and scaffold instructional shifts required for comprehension of informational texts.
- Writing on demand in math enriches Go Math! units of study and focuses on key math standards requiring conceptual understanding of numbers and operations. Students annotate word problems and extract math operations. This strategy helps students analyze word problems with greater accuracy and precision showing their thinking process in an organized manner. During an interview with students, annotated word problems, illustrations, and mathematical models in work products reflected their application of strategies that focused on deepening proficiency in number operations, such as place value in adding decimals and in conceptual understanding of multi-step word problems involving multiplication.
- Lesson plans created using a uniform template promotes coherence and thoughtful attention to consistency in planning. All plans reviewed include essential questions, lesson objectives, Common Core Standards, vocabulary, assessment materials, and procedures. The school also utilizes mini-lessons to frontload vocabulary into tightly woven interdisciplinary units. The strengthening of writing in all classrooms builds upon performance tasks embedded in literacy and math lessons.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Ongoing assessment practices monitor student progress toward academic goals and reflect continuous classroom evaluation and student self-assessment.

Impact

Uniformed assessment practices are used to adjust curricula and instruction and help students evaluate their work toward meeting grade level standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders examine results from the State English language arts and math exams, and include the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) in their analysis of student work products. The focus on standards that pose the most challenge across a grade prompts teachers to adjust curricula by modifying the order in which concepts are taught, using supplemental resources such as Junior Trade Books, and incorporating more writing into lessons across all context areas. This year the instructional focus is writing on demand and annotation of multi-step equations to better solve word problems so teachers work in teams to "close holes" in their teaching.
- Conference notes and quick checks embedded in reading and math units coupled with DRAs every six weeks determine intervention services for students performing in the lowest third on each grade. Small group instruction, extended day programs and Saturday Academy foster consistent adjustments to tasks based on student needs. Consistent use of formative assessments towards grade level goals engenders mainstreaming for students in self-contained classrooms.
- Teachers and students incorporate rubrics and checklists into their daily practice to track progress toward mastery of skills. Regular use of assessments during instruction yield re-teaching of lessons for second grade teachers. For instance, craft lessons on strong story endings or the use of quotation marks to add voice in narrative writing were discussed as teachers reviewed writing samples during a grade team meeting. Students explained that they use rubrics to get high grades on their work. During classroom visits, students were observed providing feedback to each other using a writing checklist.

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

The majority of teachers engages in professional collaborations and analyzes assessment data and student work that promote achievement of school goals.

Impact

Teams of teachers share responsibility for closing gaps in ELA and Math achievement, and their work has strengthened instructional capacity

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work in tandem in differentiated professional teams to improve and study classroom practices. Trends in student data fuel collaborative focus on school-wide goals and student progress. Teachers track trends in performance with a particular eye on math; uncovering deficits related to word problems and student understanding of content-based vocabulary.
- Teachers report that they are responsible for achieving goals and expectations aimed at improved writing, which they believe will close gaps in reading and math. Second grade teachers meet weekly to assess student work. Collectively, they identify strengths and areas of deficit in samples of writing on demand tasks. A discussion on the insertion of dialogue in narrative writing engenders ideas on craft lessons, such as the use of quotation marks, speech bubbles, and "sharing the pen" to bolster this third grade skill in second grade writers. Based on investigations of past and current student data, teachers create performance tasks and use EngageNY modules to increase rigor in math.
- An established, online data system provides school-wide access to relevant student data, facilitates improvement to instruction, and helps teachers to determine adjustments to curricular plans. The empowering of transparency about areas of strength and challenge in student learning, across the school, is visible in the strong command of writing skills as evident in structure, development, and conventions in samples of essay and narrative writing pieces displayed in classrooms, corridors and in work folders.