



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Maurice Sendak Community School

Elementary School K118

**211 8th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: W. Elizabeth Garraway

**Date of review: April 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop**

The School Context

The Maurice Sendak Community School is an elementary school with 169 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 1. The school population comprises 7% Black, 12% Hispanic, 59% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 10% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.9%.

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	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	Celebration	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	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:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the school all teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts, as well as by discussions at the team and school levels, that strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula through rich academic tasks.

Impact

Guided by a shared core belief system that results in educational coherence, effective teaching strategies are shared across classrooms, so that all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, and result in deep student discussion, participation and ownership as seen in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's student centric focus was evident in every classroom. The rooms were routinely welcoming, well organized, and print-rich. Reflecting the school-wide focus on language development, teachers encouraged discussion through extensive questioning and exposure at all times during the day. In a kindergarten class during snack time, the teacher read students a book called *The Jolly Postman* that was aligned to their literacy unit of study of fairy tales. As the students nibbled, she read and asked contextual vocabulary questions such as, "What does finery mean?" A student replied, "It means fancy clothes." She then asked about the word "inconsolable," and when students could not define it she modeled a tragic face, and one child responded, "sad."
- Educational assistants work full time in all classrooms to ensure that all of the young students in this pre-kindergarten to grade 1 school are given the extra adult support they need across the content areas. For example, in a pre-kindergarten dual language class, center time afforded students a rich opportunity to explore their thematic unit on spring by working in centers that included a dirt (soil) center, observing live caterpillars for their science journal, creating caterpillars in the art center and building structures using recyclable materials. As the students worked, the teacher circulated and interviewed the students in their center group in order to develop oral language, taking notes as she did so. The educational assistant worked with the students in the caterpillar center assisting them in developing their journal in both English and Spanish and a special education teacher support service pedagogue encouraged discussion in a small group.
- Student work tasks and products consistently require higher order thinking and development of conceptual academic skills. In a kindergarten math lesson, students were informed that, "As mathematicians, today you will be taking a survey. Put your thumb under your chin if you know what a survey is." After a brief review, the students began circulating and began interviewing each other with self-generated questions such as, "Which one do you like better *Star Wars* or *Frozen*, cats or dogs?" At one point, she called her "mathematicians" together for a moment to note how proud she was of their work and point out that one student was using tally marks.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas, and teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding that support student self-assessment.

Impact

Curricula and instruction are adjusted by teachers based on the results of student assessments, including ongoing checks for understanding, to meet the learning needs of all students. However, as the school is very small at this point, and only serves early childhood, they have not yet fully developed all protocols for self-assessment and review that will be used as the school grows.

Supporting Evidence

- As a start-up school, the school leader and her teachers have established excellent assessment and data review protocols that are used by all teachers school-wide. Student progress is tracked over the course of their years at the school and not just for their grade year. All students are assessed in English language arts and math monthly, using an array of assessments, including Teachers College oral language conversations and running records as benchmarks, as well as math unit assessments and the data is entered into a Google drive that makes it accessible to all staff. Further, teachers have utilized self-developed oral language assessments that determine language needs through such non-traditional means as lunch with the principal. Both teachers and educational assistants take conference notes for all students. While these structures are well embedded in the school and provide high quality data on the current students, this school is not yet at scale and is still developing clear data analysis protocols that can be expanded to meet the needs of a pre-kindergarten through grade 5 population.
- The school has made strategic adjustments to the curriculum based on the analysis of student data, both formative and anecdotal. For example, although the school is deeply rooted in the methodologies of the Teachers College Readers and Writers Workshop, reflection on student decoding indicated that phonics instruction needed to be enhanced. As result, the school has implemented Foundations which has a more structured approach to this learning. Additionally, after carefully evaluating the subjectivity of the running record protocol currently in use, the school has decided to move to the Fountas and Pinnell assessment to ensure that students are accurately evaluated.
- Ongoing checks for understanding were utilized in all classrooms visited. Teachers asked students to "Put a thumb under your chin if you know what this word means," or "Thumbs up if you understand your job today," and consistently used an array of questions to conduct student checks during the lessons. Further, the educational assistants focused their check-ins on students whose data indicated they needed additional support throughout every lesson, even if they did not ask for help or support.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core, content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, ensuring that rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized across the curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

The active practice of aligning the curricula to the Common Core has resulted in coherence across grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness so that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader and her staff have developed a rich, interdisciplinary curriculum that is well aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, developmentally appropriate for the early childhood students, and coherently implemented across all grades and subject areas. The school utilizes and adapts the Teacher College Readers and Writers Workshop model as well as TERC and Engage NY for math instruction school wide to ensure complete common core alignment. In order to expand student fluency and decoding, the school has integrated Foundations into the literacy curriculum as well. The arts and foreign language are also an essential component of student learning as exemplified by the schools dual language instruction and foreign language integration during music. Units such as poetry and student inquiry investigations into the community are built into curriculum maps that were created from scratch in all content areas, and were evidenced during document review.
- The level of coherence at the school is remarkable in that not only do all teachers use the same grade level curriculum maps they collaborate to develop, but they also work collectively to craft unit and lesson plans and present them to students at the same time. As there are only two to three classes on a grade, the options for support of students and teacher reflection on the success of the lessons is embedded in the curriculum, which can easily be adjusted to meet student needs.
- Levels of rigor at the school can be seen in the curriculum maps and in the lessons plans developed by teachers. Extensive student questioning and discussion is built into all documents and into the execution of the instruction as well. For example, in one first grade classroom during Writer's Workshop, the lesson plan indicated that the students would be working to make their writing richer through the use of adjectives, so-called "sparkly words." This was then evidenced in the classroom when students in a turn and talk described "sparkly words" as words that were used to make the writing "more juicy" or "more interesting" or to "help the reader understand better."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations (professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching) to the entire staff, and provides extensive training, so that expectations are effectively connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

The school has developed a culture of mutual accountability for the well-defined high expectations, for both teachers and students that are well aligned to the Danielson Framework. This has resulted in successful partnerships with staff and families that support student progress toward meeting those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The level of expectation at this school is consistently shared from the moment a staff member is hired or a student enters the building, and grows exponentially as he or she becomes part of the school community. Every adult in the building is expected to be an instructional leader. Everyone is seen as a learner. The focus is universally on student success, so all adults hold each other accountable for impacting the life of students in a positive and meaningful way. Teachers in the team meeting clear defined these expectations: “We want independent students who become community leaders, people who love to learn and make positive changes in the world.” This level of mutual accountability is seen in interactions with parents and in the way teachers focus their students. Students are responsible for their own behavioral needs and comfortably say, “I need a moment for a break,” when they are upset. They are also responsible for others, as they see themselves as “friends who take care of each other.” This was evidenced during classroom visits in the way students supported each other as they worked in their centers.
- The school has a learning and mentoring partnership with a very strong elementary school in the district and as such has adopted extensive instructional practices and has provided teachers with rich professional development opportunities. These are also well supported by professional development from Teachers College. Teachers are given time to plan and receive weekly emails from the principal covering all expectations including social emotional and instructional priorities. Workshops on the Common Core and other instructional priorities keep parents well informed and highly engaged. Because of the size of the school communication is ongoing and consistent. Teachers comment that, “The principal makes the community joyous.” Parents knowledgeably share school-wide goals and state that the principal is a “hands on person who is there for us.” They comment on the ongoing information that they receive from the school about their children’s progress in emails, conferences and ongoing conversations.
- Students develop the skills needed to truly prepare them to be college and career ready by participating in inquiry projects that empower students to develop questions and explore real world learning. For example, in collaboration with parents, students undertook a Transit Inquiry Study that used technology to expand actual transit system experiences. They made metro cards, created their own conductor booth and created their own subway map. These opportunities, coupled with the school’s focus on social emotional support and rigorous instruction including the arts and foreign language, provide students with a plethora of skills need to succeed at the next academic level and ensure a seamless transition.

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 inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity, promoted the implementation of the Common Core (including the instructional shifts), and created distributed leadership structures that are deeply embedded school-wide.

Impact

Teacher inquiry of student work has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Teacher leaders communicate key instructional decisions to the administration to effectively impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- As the school only has two teachers per grade common preps allow collaborative team planning on a daily basis. Planning time is specifically scheduled weekly, in addition to common preps which are scheduled twice weekly. In addition, a school-wide vertical team comprised of all grades meets during Monday professional development time on alternate weeks. Teachers structure all grade meetings and the vertical team is facilitated by teachers and, on occasion, by the administration. Teachers utilize this collaborative time to reflectively evaluate student data on common assessments and student work whether written or anecdotal conference notes. In addition, the principal videotapes all student lunches with the principal so that student language development can be reviewed and assessed.
- Curriculum maps, unit plans and student documents are all available online and afford the administration the opportunity to monitor the progress of team inquiry and to participate in both supporting the process and deepening her knowledge of school-wide and grade-wide trends. This consistency of engagement has led to a coherence of practice ensuring that all teachers are cognizant of the needs of students and adjust their instruction practices to meet those needs. For example, reflecting on student data, the vertical team determined that the TERC math program was not fully Common Core aligned and not sufficiently challenging for students. Consequently, they are reviewing math samples from a number of math programs including EngageNY to determine the appropriate math curriculum to meet needs of students. The teachers have shared read alouds and instructional strategies and even brainstormed suggested parent supports. The adjustments to the curriculum are then seen in principal observations and re-evaluated during the inquiry cycle.
- Distributive leadership is a cornerstone of the school. Teachers run teams and form study groups. Paraprofessionals are truly treated as educational professionals and attend professional development with their teachers. Teacher decision making is a strong component of work of school. For example, when teachers and paraprofessionals request professional development, the principal is flexible and responsive and gives them the space to do so. Educational assistants go to the same workshops as teachers and are trained in reading rescue, writing, and math. Additionally, based on teacher reflection on the limited Common Core alignment of TERC math, and at the behest of the staff, the school incorporated EngageNY into the math curriculum. The United Federation of Teachers Chapter Chair proudly related that the all voices are well heard at the school. "Her door is always open. Working here is not job-like or burdensome. She trusts us."