



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 131

Elementary School K131

**4305 Fort Hamilton Parkway
Brooklyn
NY 11219**

Principal: Ruth Quiles

**Date of review: January 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Anita Skop**

The School Context

P.S. 131 is an elementary school with 1147 students from grade Pre-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 57% Hispanic, 9% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 44% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. 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	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	Focus	Proficient
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	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	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and have established a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

The principal and her administrative team successfully partner with families to support student progress toward defined expectations, so that all students, including high-need subgroups, are provided with clear, focused feedback and guidance support, own their educational experience and are well prepared and eager for the next level of academic challenge.

Supporting Evidence

- The teachers are truly professional and create the committed collaborative culture present at this school. Teachers expressed that their school leader leads by example, is emotionally intelligent and supports them in a very reflective way that makes inherent high expectations of themselves and students.
- To address both professional development and parent engagement, teachers have set up Tuesdays innovatively by both using it as a time to conduct assessments such as running records for reading and unit assessments in the content areas, inviting parents to watch and understand the assessments and what it reveals about student learning needs. Teachers regularly host workshops for parents to prepare them for the next unit of study as well as read aloud days with parents. By engaging parents, teachers collect information on what they need to change in their assessments to get granular with determining specific student learning needs. Parents say they feel welcome to see how their children learn and how teachers understand their children.
- Students are taught high expectations inside the classroom through regular, concrete teacher feedback that provides them with guidance on how to improve their work and what mastery means. Beyond the classroom the peer mediation program, which requires students to apply with a writing sample, teaches resolutions through supervised role-play. Student voice is heard and valued.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices in the vast majority of classrooms are strongly 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, the instructional shifts, and discussions at the team and school levels.

Impact

High-quality, deeply embedded teaching practices thoroughly aligned to the Common Core, routinely reflect high levels of student thinking, extensive student run conversations, effective student groupings and student ownership of learning. However, in a very few classes, books provided for student reading were insufficiently challenging or inappropriately matched to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Students were assigned roles in groups such as strategy maker, captain and information finder. Students had different math challenges in math classes, which they then peer evaluated and discussed with their partners.
- Students are flexibly grouped in all classes. All students have access to the curriculum through grouping choices options such as assigned roles in small groups, refer-to charts, manipulatives, sentence prompts, native language support and rubrics for self-assessment. Further students and teachers frequently referenced prior knowledge acquired through previous lesson and work.
- Across the majority of classrooms, high levels of student thinking and participation resulted in quality work products as a result of the use of scaffolded access points to rich materials that were well aligned to student needs and rigorous to support Common Core learnings. In a few isolated cases, the materials were inappropriate to student needs, limiting the ability of students to take ownership of their learning. For example, in a first grade class, the books in the student book baggies were too low level to address the character development requirement of the lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are well aligned to the Common Core and content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, so that curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The continuous and reflective curricular alignment by the administration and teachers has resulted in coherence across grades and rich subject area tasks that promote college and career readiness and ensure that all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers found that Fountas and Pinnell levels were not indicative of student work and made the switch to Teachers College Reading and Writing Project running record assessments as well as book introductions. Teachers collaboratively created mini-units in the curriculum map to introduce literary response before actual unit in grade 3. This enhanced writing in the content areas as there was less focus on literary response. To support cross-content instruction, a math lens using EngageNY to challenge students has changed reading to ensure that engagement was authentic.
- Teacher teams regularly read articles together and using that readers' perspective ensure that students are matched to books they wanted to read independently changing the amount of literature students are exposed to. Further, teachers now incorporate active listening and expanded turn and talk in the lower grades by deepening the level of questioning.
- Reflecting on student needs, teachers made two changes in essay writing by front-loading the mini unit prior to the actual unit to enhance writing skills. Students now have to find details to support a claim then write an essay with this information. This allowed teachers to look at length and stamina and notice that students are not answering the question being asked appropriately, and resulted in stronger direct instruction and more targeted responses, especially for English language learners.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms common assessments are used to create a clear picture of student progress towards goals and across grades and subjects and teachers reflectively use checks for understanding and student self- assessment.

Impact

As a result, all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrate increased mastery and teachers make effective adjustments to meet all student learning needs, so that students are aware of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has created consistency of grading and students' reading level profile and writing continuum assessments are research-based and normed and math unit assessments are created for the whole schools by grade. Every report card is provided to parents and students with feedback. Assessment data files are shared via Dropbox and updated frequently so that student learning can be reviewed in collaborative teams.
- Assessments are aligned to instructional goals and teachers determined Teachers College Reading and Writing Project continuum, Fountas and Pinnell, EngageNY assessments and formative exit tickets to be appropriate measures of student learning. Teachers create writing stamina and academic goals based on student learning needs from the assessments. This has resulted in improved levels of mastery based on Fountas and Pinnell reading levels, especially for English language learners, as well as increased use of academic vocabulary during classroom discussions.
- Teachers use checks for understanding in all classes. Signals such as thumbs up and protocols such as "hold up your whiteboard," as well as teacher conferences and circulation provide instantaneous feedback to allow for adjustments to meet student needs. For example, in a third grade integrated co-teaching class, students used thumbs up and math self-assessment exit slips as checks for understanding during a lesson on number bonds.

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 significantly impacted the achievement of school goals, strengthened pedagogy school-wide, promoted the implementation of the Common Core, including the instructional shifts and embedded distributive structures that ensure effective teacher leadership.

Impact

Professional teacher collaborations have resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, and have increased teacher capacity and student achievement for all learners, as well as enabled teachers to play a key role in decisions that impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The administrative team collaborates with teachers and is willing to serve as sounding boards for each other. The professional development is done in cycles and teachers are on several teams that are horizontal by grade, vertical across grades, inquiry and book study. The professional development was restructured when it was working and now has protocols in place with facilitators to lead and agendas to set the tone and expectations. This led to a culture change with teachers now doing environmental learning walks and class visit walkthroughs now the norm. At a large school as this one, the teams' notes and minutes allow the coach and administration to follow up with teachers and provide actionable feedback.
- Teachers use protocols to review student work in a way that ensures all teachers' voices are heard and the focus is solely on student work and how to improve student achievement. Teachers use checklists across the grade for impact in serving as a teacher assessment, a student tool to support student expectations and how students problem-solve using the checklist. This teacher focus on student learning outcomes has led to teachers noticing that students are taking ownership of their learning and stating goals and letting the teacher know when and how they want to change their learning goal.
- School team practices such as voluntary team facilitators, mentor and buddy teachers and teacher leader candidates are growing leaders throughout the teacher teams. In addition, informal teacher to teacher support such as teacher videotaping in the second grade and enables teachers to develop as leaders and spreads best practices.