



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

William A. Butler Elementary School

13K133

**610 Baltic Street
Brooklyn
NY 11217**

Principal: Heather Foster-Mann

Date of review: January 6, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Lucia Perez-Medina

The School Context

William A. Butler is an Elementary school with 564 students from Pre-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 31% Black, 32% Hispanic, 30% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 5% 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 93.1%.

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

Findings

Administrators systematically convey high expectations connected to college and career readiness, to staff, students, and families and support them towards success in meeting the expectations.

Impact

The school continually raises the bar for high quality work by all staff and students, leading to collective responsibility for learning and ongoing improvement in staff and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- In an effort to communicate high expectations to all school constituents, staff received a handbook specifically designed for each constituent. A teacher's calendar is distributed with monthly events and upcoming deadlines, and professional development opportunities for teachers. Professional development topics such as Providing Meaningful Feedback to Students and Strengthening Questioning and Discussion Techniques provide teachers with insights to strengthen practice and support the school's expectations.
- A parent stated that at a "Curriculum Night" the school informed families of expectations for their children and gave out curriculum newsletters. Another parent added that the school sends home progress reports, invites them to parent teacher conferences, and uses Class Dojo, an online communication system, to inform them about their children's progress in meeting expectations for learning. One proudly noted that her child said "I know what it takes to be a successful leader" then explained the seven habits of a leader to her. Parents also praised the school for hosting workshops, including a workshop on Common Core Learning Standards and a math workshop where families received resources to take home to help their children with assignments.
- Monthly parent curriculum newsletters detailing what students in each grade will be learning for the month across all the content areas are sent home to families and made available at the school's ClassDojo portal for families to reference. In addition, during the first Friday of every month parents participate in workshops designed to help parents understand the curriculum and learn strategies and then have a follow session "Coffee Chats" with the principal to share constructive feedback, questions or concerns.
- Teachers receive a monthly letter and newsletter that is aligned to the instructional focus and measures of teacher practice. A weekly bulletin, Weekly Buzz reminds staff of the instructional expectations, professional learning opportunities and other important events for that week.
- The school communicates with parents about learning expectations through monthly notices, weekly parent conferences and progress reports. Workshops provided to families include Preparing Students to Meet the Common Core Learning Standards and partnerships like Parents as Learning Partners, participate allow families to engage in reading, math, social studies or science activities once a month with their child. Additionally, parents visit classrooms regularly and participate in student's academic and social emotional learning by attending honor roll ceremonies and special events.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although the school's curricula is rigorous and coherent, the school has not yet fully embedded multiple entry points so that lessons fully challenge students and engage all students in high levels of thinking and discussion.

Impact

Lessons do not consistently challenge all students, particularly high performers, to their full potential, thus limiting opportunities for them to engage in higher order thinking tasks and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classes, students are presented with the same task and receive limited feedback from the teacher. In some cases, several students quickly completed the task with no further direction while others struggled with minimal support. For example, during a first grade reading lesson, students were asked to use illustrations and facts to describe key details in an informational text. Seven students had completed the assignment and were provided with no extension activity, while four students struggled with describing their noticing to their partner. In a science class, students completed the same graphic organizer about density and the students had to make a prediction about which items sink or float. However, six students completed the task independently and no extension activity was available to challenge their thinking.
- In some of the classrooms visited students had opportunities to engage in partnership discussions however across classrooms, there were uneven levels of student thinking and participation. During a reading lesson, the teacher asked students to discuss the author's point of view with their partners and some students discussed it with the partners, while other students did not participate or respond to their partner. In an Integrated Co- Teaching (ICT) class, there were two groups of students completing the same graphic organizer. The students were not given the opportunity to engage in a discussion with their partners or within their groups. One group completed the task, with five students sitting quietly waiting for the teacher without an extension activity available, while another group had difficulty completing the task without access to supports such as partnership talk, sentence starters or other scaffolds to support their understanding of the task and accelerate their learning.
- In classrooms visited, a few students participated in class discussions and students had access to discussion prompts. In one of the seven classrooms visited, students were able to explore their thinking and use evidence or examples to support their reasoning. In four classrooms visited, there were no opportunities for peer-to-peer discussions and supports available for students to articulate their learning to their partners.
- In five out of seven classrooms, students worked in groups. However, in most cases all students worked on the same task, with no visible modifications for the most struggling or accelerated learners. For example, in one math class visited, all students were expected to highlight what the question is asking them to do and answer a few word problems. Eleven students were able to complete the task within a few minutes and waited for further instructions, while five students needed additional guidance to complete the task independently.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Using student work and data, the school has developed and implemented curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, accessible to all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

The school's commitment to continuously reviewing and modifying curricula results in all learners having access to coherently sequenced units of study with academic tasks designed to accelerate learning leading to the promotion of career and college readiness across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Observation of teacher teams and a review of minutes of meetings show that teachers review student work and data, revising curricula to promote access by all learners. For example, during the third grade team meeting, teachers noted that student responses did not show much use of a strategy to describe the distributive property. The teachers then decided to modify the curriculum by providing additional strategies for students, such as to visually show them the distributive property, to better understand the split in arrays.
- Across classrooms, curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills. Unit maps show tasks that require students to engage in complex tasks such as a fifth grade unit task that requires learners to “analyze how a narrator’s point of view affects the descriptions of events in a story”.
- Coherence is developed in writing through revised units that focus on a planned, deliberate sequence of learning. Learning is paced and developed throughout the year in grades K-5 by teaching writing units for each of the text types. Teachers stated that students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, develop a foundation for each text type, with teachers providing more time for students to learn fewer but deeper concepts or ideas within the six-week unit cycle.
- The school's math curriculum is supplemented by Math Exemplars to improve student's fluency, ability to demonstrate conceptual understanding and discussions in writing through problem solving in real world contexts.
- The school uses Common Core aligned curriculum materials such as Pearson's *Ready Gen* and the New York State Education Departments curricula, developed by *Common Core, Inc. A Story of Units* from Engage New York for math, *Teacher's College Writing Units* and New York State scope and sequence in science and social studies. The school's English language arts curriculum is supplemented with NYC scope and sequence social studies and science trade books to improve student's comprehension, fluency and ability to demonstrate a balance of informational and literary texts and text complexity.

Findings

Assessment practices consistently reflect effective feedback to students. Teachers use checks for understanding and student self-assessment to make adjustments to lessons at the teacher team and classroom levels.

Impact

Assessment practices consistently result in instructional adjustments and next learning steps to improve student outcomes for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Student work products include feedback in the form of next steps for improvement increases student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers implement common assessments, including running records, Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments in reading, writing and math, assessing student's proficiency and content knowledge related to varied performance tasks.
- The principal noted that as a result of a review of grade level assessment data, she pushes teachers to infuse more writing across content areas and attributes that to the samples of lengthy pieces of student writing shown on bulletin boards. In addition, the principal indicated that school's shift from *Go Math* to *Story of Units from Engage NY* Curriculum for grades K-5 is a direct result of findings from assessment data, which highlighted areas of need solving multi step word problems was not effectively addressed by the previous *Go Math* curriculum.
- Third grade students were given more time writing and receiving feedback from peers and teachers by extending the instruction time from twenty days to thirty days. A third grade bulletin board displayed the Unit 2 writing assignment, "Students will write opinion pieces on a text, supporting a point of view with reasons." Drawings and illustrations were used to help support stated opinion. A rubric aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards used to assess the writing, was displayed along with the published writing pieces. The use of the specific rubric established a protocol for teachers to look at student work across different performance levels.
- In most classrooms visited, teachers were checking for understanding. In a first grade classroom during English language arts lesson the teacher checked for understanding of student work, observation, questioning and tasks. The teacher used a chart to capture her findings. During a first grade lesson, students were asked to assess their level of understating with the task and had an "Assess yourself Chart" available for students to reference. This practice was evident in four out of seven classrooms visited.
- During the student meeting, most students were able to articulate their levels and what they needed to do to improve their work. One student stated "I received a level 4 on this assignment; however, I can always refine my language." Another student stated "when we get our writing back we use a rubric and checklist to review our work to make it better." A review of student's notebooks and portfolio indicate that most student work includes feedback in the form of next steps for improvement.

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

Teachers participate in professional teamwork to analyze student work and data to adjust curricula to inform instructional decisions, with targeted focus on the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts whilst focusing on improved student outcomes.

Impact

Instructional decisions and professional collaborations made by the teacher teams lead to increased student progress and teacher capacity in alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards through collaborative standard-based planning and inquiry study sessions weekly. Teacher teams discuss the following topics: Common Core Learning Standards -aligned curriculum planning, ongoing assessment and data review, and differentiated instructional strategies to increase student achievement. Teachers articulated that they use protocols like the Tuning Protocol to analyze student work products.
- Grade leaders participate in instructional cabinet and facilitate the work with vertical and horizontal grade teams. This practice has resulted in a coherent curriculum across grades and content areas. For example, a review of agendas reflected how the vertical math team focused on a common goal of how to use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies as a means of giving targeted students greater access to math lessons.
- Teachers meet every Monday for professional learning and once a week for inquiry. During the observed teacher team meeting, teachers articulated that during inquiry meetings they focus on strengthening the math skills of the lowest one third students in third grade. As a result, students are being targeted for math one period, three times a week during the math block to reinforce their multiplication and division skills.
- Teacher teams meet weekly to examine student work and engage in making adjustments to lessons to ensure that teams understand the needs of all students. For example, in a teacher team meeting, a teacher shared the end of module assessment results. This data was analyzed and teachers spoke about stretching the unit for two additional weeks to ensure students mastery on multiplication and division.