



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 134

Elementary School K134

**4001 18th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Debra Ramsaran

**Date of review: March 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Julia Bove**

The School Context

P.S. 134 is an elementary school with 570 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 12% Black, 15% Hispanic, 32% White, and 41% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 7% 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 95.5%.

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	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	Focus	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

Teacher pedagogy is developed from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and across the vast majority of classrooms teaching strategies strategically provide high quality supports and extensions.

Impact

Across classrooms, students are engaged in challenging tasks and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has an academic intervention program for students who are in the lowest third. Intense support is provided throughout the school day and is embedded in the programming of the school. In addition to guided reading strategies, the school also continues to use components of the Reading Recovery model, which is an intensive intervention program for struggling students.
- In a vast majority of classrooms, teacher presence was secondary to student presence. For example, in a second grade mathematics classroom, students were working in small groups using tiles to estimate. The teachers facilitated the groups that were not working independently. Student voices dominated. There were meaningful conversations, and students had access to enrichment and reteaching activities.
- In a first grade classroom, students were verbalizing strategies for what to do when they come to a “tricky word.” Students shared with each other strategies that they knew. One student said, “I think about what makes sense.” Another, in explaining how he learned to pronounce “sprout” said, “You could break it up. I saw ‘out’ in the word ‘sprout.’”
- A student project on westward expansion was a collaborative effort. A group of students used writing and primary source documents. The project also included a debate comparing units: Were the events of westward expansion more important than the events of the American Revolution? As a culminating activity comparing two units, one student participant posed an ethical scenario: “sticky situation: two girls like playing together. One is a settler one is a Native American. They know that parents shouldn’t choose friends for them, but they don’t want to disobey their parents. What would you do?”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provides supports, including clear and effective feedback for students, to achieve those expectations.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability amongst staff and students that ensures students are ready for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers maintain high expectations through ongoing collaboration. For example, future teachers sit in on the classes that student are currently in to observe teaching practice and student need. They then plan together for the next year and set goals with the students that are then revisited throughout the year.
- The school employs staff developers through Teachers College to work with teachers for personal and professional growth. Teachers stated that they found this collaboration helpful. Specifically, based on teacher input, the Teachers College staff developer grouped teachers for professional development in reading, writing, or listening. This addressed the school's instructional focus as well as purposefully aligned professional development to components of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT).
- Teachers expressed that they have high expectations for themselves and for their students. This is evidenced by the fact that teachers work individually with students on creating goals and achieving them. Teachers also stated that high expectations come from the top (principal) and that they felt empowered to be successful.
- Administration, teachers, parents, and students all spoke to the process of setting goals and devising strategies to achieve them. One student stated that she works with her teacher to prepare goals for Junior High School. She then asked another student if her teacher did the same thing, and the other student nodded, "yes." Students were aware of their next steps. One student stated, "I need to use place value when I solve inequalities."
- The school issues progress reports three times per year in a variety of languages. Parents are aware of ongoing feedback and stated the desire to successfully partner with the school to support their children's' progress and increase communication on college and career readiness.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in academic tasks and embedded in a coherent way across content and grades. Curricula are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Across classrooms, individuals and groups of students, including lowest and highest achieving students, English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities are cognitively engaged and demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school switched from Everyday Math to Go Math! based on the needs of students. The school collaboratively chose to implement the new program using the workshop model. This allows for teachers to modify units and lessons based on real time formative assessment gathered in the classroom and ensures that all learners have access to the content.
- Teachers collaborate on curriculum revision and embed teaching points from the Teachers College model. The principal stated that she saw the difference when she observed teacher practice. The changes are evident in curriculum maps.
- A review of teacher lesson plans revealed that all lessons engage prior knowledge, provide for quick checks for understanding, account for reteaching needs and small group activities tailored to individual and groups of students, and address essential questions.
- Across grades and subjects, instructional units plan for teaching points, mini lessons, and small group instruction. Units are created and modified by teachers around essential questions. For example, a 5th grade unit on westward expansion was written around the question “How can I apply skills in reading non-fiction to the topic of westward expansion?” Specific texts and skills such as note taking were added as needed along with real time modifications as the unit was taught.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school uses common assessment to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Assessment practices consistently inform curricular and instructional decisions so that all students including ELLs and students with disabilities are aware of their next steps and demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Based on an analysis of data from last year, the school noticed that the average student dropped in reading level by 10%. There was a more significant drop in levels for students with disabilities. As a result, guided reading became the focus. Reading fluency was affecting Fountas & Pinnell levels. The school decided to focus on fluency in writing and speaking, as well. To date, the school states that there has been an 8% increase in reading levels from November 2014 to March 2015.
- High level pre and post assessments are in place. For example, in a third grade pre assessment, students were asked to create a complex character theory of a character and identify the theme of the story. One student wrote actions the character took. In the post assessment the same student now described the character as "rude" and made other such revisions that demonstrated mastery of the topic, demonstrating an increase of two performance levels between the pre and post assessment.
- Teachers use running records, and check for understanding during lessons. Students also engage in peer assessments and work from rubrics and goal sheets. When asked about rubrics, one student stated, "We use them in guided practice with a partner at our same level. This allows us to help each other improve." Another student stated, "We mark each other's papers. We annotate in the margins and give feedback."

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 structured professional collaborations using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning. Teacher teams systematically analyze classroom practice, assessment data, and student work. (4.2a,b)

Impact

Professional collaborations and inquiry work consistently results in shared improvements of teacher practice and mastery of goals for students.

Supporting Evidence

- A majority of teachers belong to vertical teacher teams which meet weekly to analyze student work and revise teaching practice. In June, teacher teams meet to decide what changes need to be made. Teachers add their own strategies to existing units. They then create goals for students for each unit. In September, they further differentiate what they have created based on what is observed and assessed in the classroom. Teachers stated that they have flexibility to make those decisions in real time. Teachers stated that this flexibility has greatly improved student ability to navigate from text to print and back again.
- Teachers engage in four week cycles of inquiry based analysis. The results of this work can be seen in lesson plans. There is an expectation of an end product and strategies for how individual students will achieve their goals. For example, based on data, teachers decided to use peer support to increase fluency. One teacher used this approach to alter lessons for English language learners to be supported by students who were fluent in English and the native language. The result was an increase in more than three reading levels for students between the beginning and middle of the year.
- Teacher team members are able to articulate their process in a way that demonstrates that it is embedded in their daily practice. One teacher stated that she noticed that students were not listening to each other during an informal sharing out activity. She saw the implications that this could have academically, so she made the decision to formalize the process of teaching skills of listening and sharing. She applied this protocol to academic instruction and stated that students had benefited as evidenced by a higher level of writing.
- Teachers participated in selecting the school's instructional focus on writing. They visited classrooms of primary grade teachers who were teaching struggling reader/writers so that they could see what effective intervention looked like. Even teachers of upper grade students stated that this was extremely helpful in informing their own practice.