



# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Rachel Jean Mitchell**

**Elementary-Middle School K137**

**121 Saratoga Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11233**

**Principal: Zina Cooper-Williams**

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Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

## The School Context

PS/IS 137 is a pre K-8 school with 300 students from grade pre K through grade 8. The school population comprises 74% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 16% 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 89.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Assessment practices aligned to curricula across all grades and content areas generate data that informs students and teachers about students' strengths and learning needs and promotes self-assessment by all students.

### Impact

Assessment data equips teachers and students with feedback on students' performance, contributing to teachers pinpointing and addressing immediate needs of students and students' understanding of their next steps for improved achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- An assessment calendar shows that the school administers a variety of formal and informal assessments, including Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments, embedded unit assessments and end of chapter assessments, measuring students' proficiency and content knowledge related to *Reading Street*, *Prentice Hall Literature* and other curricula across content areas. Teachers assess reading levels using *I-Ready Diagnostic Assessments* and data from Performance Series assessments in English language arts and math. Teacher made assessments, *NY Ready* and interim assessments in math and literacy further provide feedback to staff and students about students' strengths and learning needs.
- Using spreadsheets such as a Class Norms Report, Grade 3-8 Item Analysis Reports and Lexile and Percentile Score Reports, administrators share with all staff, assessment data that they use to identify gaps in student learning. In addition, teachers noted that they utilize quick assessments that provide immediate information about individual and class level mastery of content, so that they can identify common errors for follow up interventions to improve levels of student performance on skills taught. For example, data from "Mid Chapter Checks Points" in *My Math* and *Go Math*, combined with data from quick writes, turn and talks and journal entries, provide immediate feedback about concepts mastered or not yet mastered and teachers re-group students for differentiated instruction.
- Classroom practices showed use of varied methods of ongoing checks for understanding. For example in an English language arts classroom visited, the teacher noticed that the students appeared to be "stuck" on a part of the task and stopped the entire class to further clarify what was expected. This led to an immediate difference in the level of peer to peer discussion about the task. In addition, lesson plans showed that ongoing assessment practices are embedded in daily lessons via questioning, sharing of ideas from group or partner work and exit slips, providing feedback on students' understanding of content and skills taught.
- Students stated that they are all well aware of grading practices and expectations for mastery, as per rubrics and the school's grading policy, as teachers regularly engage them in conferences about their grades and performance levels linked to rubrics. They also stated that they go online to look at their performance data from *I-Ready*, *Self-Ready*, and *Am I Ready* assessments and math games, which tell them how well they are doing in certain skills and what they need to work on.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Although curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards offer all students rigorous learning experiences across classrooms, curriculum documents do not illustrate a deep focus on the use of student work and data to refine tasks across subjects and grades. Unit maps do not yet reflect strategic integration of the instructional shifts in all content areas and grades.

### Impact

All students benefit from Common Core aligned curricula that drive instruction across disciplines and contribute to students' progress towards college and career readiness goals. However, there are missed opportunities to further refine curricula to ensure all students have access to additional tasks that deepen their learning in all content areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Texts such as *Glencoe Science* and *McGraw Hill Social Studies* are used to support interdisciplinary instruction that emphasizes writing across genres and reflects the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Furthermore, materials such as *Reading Street* for Pre K through grade 5 and *Prentice Hall Literature* for grades 6-8, drive Common Core aligned instruction in literacy. Similarly, instruction in mathematics is grounded in Common Core aligned resources such as *My Math/ Go Math* for students in grades Pre K – 5 and *Glencoe Math* and *CMP3* for students in grades 6 - 8. In addition, *NY Ready* and *Buckle Down* for grades 6 - 8 and the *Common Core Clinics* for grades 1 and 2, serve as supplementary materials that further promote alignment of instruction to Common Core.
- Unit plans show tasks requiring students to engage in learning activities such as making inferences from texts, annotating, and citing evidence from texts to support explanations, and problem solving. Unit maps and lesson plans viewed also contain essential questions, skills, big ideas, and links to learning standards, rubrics, vocabulary, scaffolds, and additional resources for the unit. The maps and lesson plans do not offer evidence of teacher moves to strategically integrate the instructional shifts by incorporating project based tasks that create additional opportunities for all students to be regularly engaged in-depth inquiry based activities across all content areas and grades.
- The teacher team meeting observed showed that teacher teams conduct analysis of student work and data to identify students' strengths and areas of need based on skills taught and assessed. In addition, teachers stated that based on the data, the school has added adapted versions of *Prentice Hall Literature* and implemented the *Imagine Learning* program for English language learners and students with disabilities. However, curriculum documents viewed do not illustrate revisions of unit maps and lesson plans, based on data reflecting diverse needs of individual and subgroups of students.
- During a student meeting, students showed samples of portfolio products, including mathematics projects and writing samples that illustrate their engagement in tasks that challenge them to think and solve problems every day. One student noted that some students are in the process of researching colleges "to be ready for college soon." However, portfolios viewed in some classrooms visited did not show evidence of in-depth writing and research in all content areas.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and academic tasks immerse students in rigorous work and discussions that foster higher-order thinking.

### Impact

Cognitively demanding tasks promote student progress towards learning goals via student participation in learning activities that allow them to demonstrate high levels of thinking and engagement in discussions across classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Within each subject area and across grade levels, lessons offered multiple opportunities for students in flexible groupings to learn and practice new concepts and skills with peers and individually, through focus questions provided by teachers. For example, students in a grade 6 math class worked individually or in groups to solve problems involving addition and subtraction of multi-digit decimals. One group worked individually on laptops while others used manipulatives to work on differentiated problem sets with peers in their groups. Similarly, in a social studies class with fifth and sixth grade students, the students worked in groups using excerpts from differentiated texts to find evidence about challenges faced by immigrants. As they worked to respond to focus questions posed by the teacher, they received differentiated levels of support from three adults (two paraprofessionals and one teacher) in the room.
- Tasks and lessons facilitated student participation and sustained student-to-student dialogue and student generated questions, in most classrooms visited. For example, in a third grade math class, the teacher used effective questioning to drive high level peer to peer questioning and discussion as students worked in groups. They charted solutions to problems involving “use of models and number lines to compare fractions” and used a rubric to rate each other’s group presentation as they shared their answers and rationales for differentiated problem sets. A similar pattern was noted in a grade 8 math class where a lesson on “the relationships between numerical variables” evolved into a student led discussion, as students worked in groups using a ruler and chart paper to determine responses and share out rationales for differentiated tasks. This high level of student engagement in discussions was not seen in a few other classrooms.
- Provision for multiple entry points to learning was evident across classrooms. For example, in a grade 2 English language arts lesson about how to distinguish between fact and opinion, one student worked on a laptop, others worked with peers in groups of three and a few others worked in a teacher supported “Strategy Intervention Group.” She used a Smartboard to show video clips of people in conversations illustrating examples of facts and opinions. A science lesson for grade 5 students also showed varied approaches and supports for learning. The teacher used a Smartboard to show stages of a rock cycle, handed out rocks and a tile to groups of students and asked group leaders to guide their peers in reading an excerpt from a text about rocks. They used the tile to test the rocks and then recorded their findings as to the types of rocks. These two lessons provided an extension of the task for advanced learners, a feature that was not evident in other classrooms.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school leaders communicate to staff and families, high expectations for improved teaching and learning. The school provides support to families, contributing to students' success in meeting the school's expectations.

### Impact

The school's high expectations for learning are shared with all staff and families who work collaboratively with each other to ensure that they all meet the expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parents interviewed stated that through a Parent Handbook, letters, a monthly calendar and newsletters, the school informs them about high expectations for their children. They noted that families are always invited to visit the school, especially on "Talk to Me Tuesdays", and added that some attended events such as "Dad Bring your Child to School Day" and "Curriculum Night", where they learned about school expectations and received materials to support their children at home. One parent also said that parents learned about college and career readiness via a workshop and a "College T-shirt Day" when staff members wore the T-Shirt of the college they had attended and discussed their college experiences with them and students, who wore the T-Shirt of a college of their choice.
- During the parent meeting, parents stated that progress reports and report cards are sent home, providing them with regular feedback about their children's readiness for the next level. They noted that since September the school has hosted workshops about Common Core Learning Standards and Special Education, helping families to learn about goals for their children and how to help them achieve the goals. One parent added that the Parent Coordinator hosts breakfasts and publishes a monthly parent newsletter which also keeps them informed about expectations. Meetings, including a mandatory 8<sup>th</sup> grade parent meeting hosted by the guidance counselor, are used to communicate criteria and expectations for promotion to both parents and students.
- Documents such as the Faculty Handbook, professional development calendar, Principal's Corner in "The Word" newsletter, inter-visitation log, lesson plan template, and "Norms for Teacher Teams" illustrate high expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, that are shared with all staff. For example, the lesson plan template states instructional expectations linked to walk-throughs and observations and the "Norms for Teacher Teams" document outlines expectations for team meetings. Similarly, a "Bulletin Board Memo" and a "Calendar of Report Card Deadlines" are explicit in informing staff of expectations to be met as part of their accountability for teaching and learning.
- The school's "Professional Development Plan", minutes of staff meetings and inter-visitation logs, illustrate the school's high expectations for professional learning via peer-to-peer inter-visitations. The principal noted that teachers are trained to focus on a specific domain during the inter-visitation period and provide feedback to their colleagues. They use protocols and a log with specific instructional next steps and timelines for teachers to implement new strategies learned. Teachers noted that administrators use conferences, reviews of unit and lesson plans, feedback from observations and analysis of student work and data, to hold staff accountable for meeting all expectations.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

Scheduled professional collaborations allow teams of teachers to share content knowledge and strategies that improve teaching and learning. Distributed leadership structures allow staff to work with peers and administrators on school improvement goals and initiatives.

**Impact**

The inclusion of all staff in teams empowers all teachers to work collaboratively in improving teacher practice and be actively involved in school level decision-making.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All staff members are programmed for common planning in team meetings where they engage in collaborative inquiry activities. For example at the teacher team meeting observed, one group of teachers used a “Student Work Analysis Protocol,” an anchor paper and a rubric to examine three samples of student work. The work showed three levels of performance (High, Low, Expected) on an English language arts performance task that required students to make inferences and cite evidence from an article (“Bringing Solar Power to Indian Country”). Based on the students’ data teachers determined next steps for differentiation of instruction.
- The principal indicated that teams engage in a variety of professional development activities on Mondays. Teams spanning grade bands (grades Pre K-2, grades 3-4, grades 5-6 and grades 7-8) meet weekly on Mondays, focusing on improving student learning through improved instruction grounded in Common Core aligned curricula. All teachers, academic intervention services providers and pupil personnel team members, collaborate with administrators, network coaches, lead teachers, and teacher leaders who provide support with data analysis, instructional resources, and next steps to improve teaching and learning. Teachers stated that teams include teachers of the current and next grade level for each child so professional learning sessions allow all staff to work together to support students in meeting requirements for their current and future grade level.
- Teachers identified for high levels of expertise are offered positions as grade leader, model teacher or lead teacher, building teacher capacity in relation to instruction aligned to targeted elements of the Danielson Framework. The lead teacher turnkeys professional development to teacher teams while the model teacher and grade leaders serve as intermediaries between teachers and administrators. They are responsible for disseminating information on school wide priorities, sharing best practices with peers, helping to refine curricula and leading team analysis of performance data. Some staff members also serve on the professional development team, collaborating with administrators in planning and implementing a menu of professional development activities based on teacher survey data.
- Teachers at the team meetings stated that they provide regular input in school level decision-making, including the selection of current Common Core aligned curricula for English language arts and math, and resources for afterschool and Saturday intervention and enrichment programs. They also stated that they are empowered to set the agenda for weekly team meetings.