



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

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**Elementary School K139**

**330 Rugby Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11226**

**Principal: Mary McDonald**

**Date of review: May 5, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Julia Bove**

## The School Context

P.S. 139 is an elementary school with 1,020 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 33% Black, 38% Hispanic, 10% White, and 17% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.5%.

## 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>Developing</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>Additional Findings</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers engage in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations where they consistently analyze key elements such as classroom practice, assessment data, and student work with embedded leadership opportunities. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

### Impact

The work of the teacher teams results in shared improvements in teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students. Teachers have a voice in decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers had the opportunity this year to form teams based on teacher interest and student needs. Each team has a predetermined facilitator and a scope and sequence. Some teams are based on grade and others are based on topic. Team topics include looking at student work and writing like scientists. These collaborations result in shared practice and improved teacher practice. For example, the second grade team created a concrete toolkit for other grades to use. Teams also share best practices using Google Docs.
- A teacher team devoted to analyzing the work of struggling readers studied existing reading levels and bands of text complexity. Because of the work of this team, many of the targeted students improved by two reading levels.
- In a grade 2 teacher team meeting, teachers shared that they noticed their students were not previewing non-fiction pieces carefully enough before reading, a process known as a “picture walk.” They used this information to plan next steps to ensure that students generate questions based on the picture walk and that they have a plan to create their own entry points into the text.
- A teacher team invited a student to the meeting. They told the student, “We need to learn the steps that students take when they read. Can you read to us and show us what you do?” The student did an out loud picture walk of a book about African elephants. The student then read as the teachers took running record notes. These notes would inform future meetings.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades, subjects, and for English language learners (ELLs) and special education students.

### Impact

The school inconsistently ensures engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects that is resulting in uneven accessibility of Common Core aligned curricula for a variety of learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have the freedom to modify existing instructional units aligned to the Common Core. However, in a majority of cases, teachers do not modify these units from the published curricula. Teachers stated that in the past they wrote their own units but this year they were focusing on broadening content knowledge through Metamorphosis, a research-based program to coach teachers in content. As a result, they thought it best to adhere to the curriculum as published.
- A kindergarten unit on persuasive writing showed evidence of differentiated activities. However, these were limited to citations such as, “use chart with para for guidance,” and “stay on topic.” By contrast, a lesson utilizing the Reader’s Workshop model contained differentiated activities such as “use demonstration text to highlight the skill,” and “use specific words to describe character.” These modifications were grouped by student and the assessment used to create the grouping.
- A fourteen-lesson unit on story arcs did not contain any strategies to differentiate instruction. This was also the case for a grade 4 literacy and a grade 2 science unit.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teacher pedagogy reflects a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching that promotes high levels of student engagement.

### Impact

Curricular aligned teacher practices result in student work products and discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a literacy classroom, students worked in pairs and groups to develop a theory about a subject by paying attention to the relationships with other subjects. The students used post-it notes to document evidence from the text. A student in one of the pairs read about Leif Erickson's trans-Atlantic voyage and wrote, "It must have been hard to get past all that wind." The student then stated, "My partner had the same idea." The partner then responded, "I saw it in the text, sailing was difficult, and the wind made it hard to stay dry."
- In a science classroom, students gathered data based on a hypothesis that they had already formulated. They worked in groups and recorded data individually on whether a ping-pong or a cotton ball would roll farther when blown on with a straw. The teacher encouraged them not to be afraid to be incorrect and that it is through those kinds of struggles that scientists learn things.
- In a math classroom, groups of students used rulers to find the perimeter of objects in the room. They were encouraged to choose objects in advance that they thought they could measure. When one child decided that he could measure the light fixture, his partner asked how he was going to get to the ceiling. The student laughed and said, "Oh yeah, you're right." This was evidence of students being encouraged to explore and struggle productively with problems.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use ongoing assessments aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

### **Impact**

The use of assessments provides students and teachers with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In a literacy class, students filled out a "book club chart." After the teacher conferred with several groups of students, she paused to address the students, sharing that she noticed students were only recording the chapters that they were reading. She then redirected them to document the work that they were doing.
- Student work displays contained actionable feedback such as "remember to use the word wall and anchor charts to help you with sight words," and "you used an interesting method to come up with combinations of 7. Try using this method with larger numbers."
- In a kindergarten class, students were able to articulate examples of how they assess each other and themselves. One student held up a stop sign on a stick and stated, "We use the stop sign to put in the book page when we need to stop and think." Another stated, "We use these (post-it notes) to mark the book for the big questions."

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward achieving those expectations toward a path to college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

The communication of high expectations with the supports to achieve them has led to a culture of mutual accountability for all members of the school community. The school's successful partnering with families enables them to support their children's progress toward meeting expectations.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Through the school's partnership with Teachers College, the principal and the administration sent a clear message this year that professional development leads to student achievement. The principal revised school goals to include qualitative data and states a clear message that all learners improve through "productive struggle."
- The school communicates weekly with parents, providing classroom syllabi with extensive objectives. The school also maintains a website that provides information to parents and an instructional blog so that teachers and coaches can interact regarding student progress.
- Students are aware of their goals. During a meeting with students, one student stated, "My goal is to use a variety of transitional words." Another student stated, "I have a problem with spelling. My goal is to use words that I already know to help me spell other words independently".