



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

PS 150 The Christopher Street School

Elementary School K150

**364 Sackman Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Pamela Bradley Muchere

**Date of review: May 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

PS 150, The Christopher Street School is an elementary school with 191 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 58% Black, 33% Hispanic, 4% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.0%.

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	Developing
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	Developing
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	Proficient
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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administrators consistently communicate high expectations for learning throughout the school community and implement varied systems for supporting staff and parents in helping all students meet the expectations.

Impact

The school's outreach to families, combined with targeted supports for staff, contribute to staff and student progress in meeting school expectations and accountability for learning by all members of the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- Through tools such as a newsletter entitled, "Where Are We Going This Week", a staff handbook, classroom walkthroughs and individual conferences with staff members, administrators articulate high expectations to staff. These high expectations pertain to instructional practices, professional development and other areas of school operations. The principal holds all staff accountable for the expectations by observing lessons, attending or having an assistant principal attend team meetings and reviewing minutes and agendas of meetings. There are also scheduled intervisitations, including visits to other schools, to support teachers in meeting instructional expectations.
- During one of the team meetings, teachers stated that administrators use the Danielson Framework for Teaching to outline high expectations for instruction, with targeted focus on those expectations prior to the start of a new school year, and ongoing follow up professional development support to help them meet the expectations. All teachers receive professional development support to improve their questioning techniques and push higher order thinking by all students. Lead teachers team up with network staff to facilitate year round literacy and math professional development activities.
- Parents reported that staff members invite them to participate in conferences on Tuesdays, met with them at events such as "Friends and Family Day", parent breakfast workshop sessions and "Dad Bring Your Child to School Day". The school also hosted workshops about *GO Math!* curriculum and provided training in the use of *My On* and *I-Ready* online portals that store student performance data across content areas, to keep families abreast of their children's learning needs and progress in meeting school expectations. Hands on workshops on accessing online resources such as *Wowzers* and *Think Central*, and a workshop entitled "Improving Communications with Your Scholars School and Teacher", provided additional support in helping families work with their children. One parent noted that families also receive assessment reports that tell them about their children's progress.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

All lessons viewed showed some focus on strategies for differentiation of learning. However, there was uneven engagement of students in rigorous tasks and discussions that pushed them to think deeply about concepts presented across disciplines.

Impact

Teachers do not maximize opportunities to accelerate learning by all students, via instruction that consistently engages all students in activities and tasks that require them to demonstrate higher order thinking and high levels of participation in learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classrooms, teachers assigned rigorous Common Core aligned tasks that evoked discussions, as students quoted evidence from texts to support claims or validate responses to questions. In a grade 2 reading class the teacher asked students to cite evidence from a text to support their arguments about Johnny Appleseed “living by example”. This led to peer-to-peer discussion among groups of students who engaged in a turn and talk, using details from the text to describe Johnny Appleseed’s actions. This pattern of student-to-student interaction and discussion was not consistently evident across classrooms, as teachers did not routinely invite students to comment on responses given by their peers in some of the other classrooms visited.
- For the most part, observed lessons were teacher dominated, with students quietly listening to the teacher or to responses from a few peers whom the teacher called upon. This was particularly evident in two classes with special needs students. In one class, two adults worked on math problems with a total of 10 grade 3 students and in the other, a pre-kindergarten-grade 1 reading class, there were three students working one to one with three adults. In both classes, the adults led conversations with the students, most of whom remained silent for an extended period, as they listened to the adults thinking or reading aloud. Further, in most classrooms visited there was no additional task for students who completed the task long before their peers. This was the case in a grade 5 social studies lesson where some students quickly responded to four short response questions in the text and sat for a while, waiting for the teacher who was conferencing with a small group.
- While some lessons challenged students to respond to varied tasks using academic vocabulary, other lessons did not engage all students in critical thinking tasks. A math teacher facilitated small group work that challenged grade 3 students, including English language learners, to work with a partner on differentiated problems that required them to use academic vocabulary and a Venn diagram to classify fractions presented on strips. The students questioned each other’s thinking and strategies for problem solving and later used accountable talk stems to share their work with peers in a whole class discussion. By contrast, in a science class, the teacher engaged a group of grade 4 and 5 students with disabilities in round robin reading about patterns of motion in the solar system , pausing frequently to ask for and then state the meaning of vocabulary words herself, before moving on to the next reader. Questions such as, “What happens to the trees outside during spring? fall?” kept students limited to responses of a few words that required little thinking, especially since the answers were right on the page in the sentence just read by a peer.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school's curricula for most content areas are aligned to the Common Core and other applicable standards. Challenging tasks that promote higher order thinking across grades and content areas are not yet consistently evident in curriculum maps and lesson plans.

Impact

While curricula for some content areas show a focus on college and career readiness skills for students, they do not consistently incorporate rigorous tasks that offer all students opportunities to be immersed in demanding activities across content areas and grades.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Common Core aligned curricula such as *ReadyGEN* for instruction in literacy, social studies and science, along with *GO Math!* for math instruction. *Engage NY* resources supplement instruction in literacy, math, social studies and science. Unit and lesson plans show some integration of instructional shifts, with tasks in some cases requiring students to engage in activities such as solving problems in math, writing across genres and citing evidence from texts. However, there was little evidence of teachers further integrating the instructional shifts, by incorporating project based tasks that create additional opportunities for all students to be regularly engaged in deep, inquiry based activities across all content areas.
- Unit plans include targeted standards, essential questions, unit vocabulary, content and skills, sample assessments, resource materials, texts and timeframes for instruction. However, most unit maps showed generic references to activities that did not illustrate emphasis on rigorous tasks, and in some cases, showed minimal content to be taught over several weeks across grade levels. For the most part, rigorous tasks were also not evident in lesson plans viewed. Further, samples of student work seen in students' work folders did not reflect teacher attention to consistent engagement of all students in rigorous tasks, including regular engagement of students, particularly in the upper grades, in research based writing activities.
- The school's curricula includes technology based programs that are used to heighten student engagement and for intervention and enrichment. These include manipulatives, Smart board activities, the use of *Wowzers*, a computer based math program, *I-Ready*, which provides additional instruction in English language arts and math, and *Think Central*, which offers online access to *GO Math!* videos, word problems, and enrichment and intervention activities. Though referenced in the school self-evaluation document, incorporation of specific instructional materials for engagement of English language learners and students with disabilities in rigorous work was not evident in instructional plans seen during the Quality Review.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Assessment practices do not consistently yield actionable feedback that is shared among staff and students to inform understanding of students' progress in learning. Use of data from assessments to adjust curriculum and instruction is not yet an established practice across classrooms.

Impact

Students do not regularly receive feedback that helps them to improve their performance and teachers do not consistently make effective adjustments to improve student achievement across content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has administered Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments, Teachers' College benchmarks for kindergarten through grade 5, and *I-Ready, GO Math!* and *ReadyGEN* assessments across grades. Teacher teams create additional assessments aligned to the Common Core Standards and to the selected curricula. Teachers at a team meeting reported that they use data gained from assessments for grouping students and to modify instruction by re-teaching strategies and skills as needed.
- Assessments and tasks within some content areas result in the sharing of feedback about students' performance in skill areas measured by the assessments. The principal used a spreadsheet with assessment data, including item skills analyses in math and literacy, to demonstrate how the school monitors proficiency levels of all students for each skill area assessed. In addition, performance data seen in a few classrooms indicated skills measured by assessments in the given content area. However, none of the available data highlighted gaps in student learning across all content areas and grades. The principal noted that due to her absence from the school for several months, some of the planned assessments were not administered. Further, a review of school documents did not provide evidence of adjustments based on in-depth data analysis and reviews of student work.
- The format, quality and quantity of teacher feedback on formal and informal assessments varied across disciplines and classrooms. Some samples of student work in examined folders showed rubric-based performance level scores with teacher comments on post-its, while others contained only checkmarks with no comments. In addition, in several of the folders examined, there were collections of work that showed no evidence of evaluation by a teacher. Classroom bulletin boards with student work also did not consistently show teachers' use of a rubric to provide actionable feedback to students via comments, with next steps for students to improve their work.

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

Structured professional collaborations provide all staff members with opportunities to share content knowledge and strategies for improving teaching and learning as part of school goals. Distributed leadership practices do not yet offer all staff members a voice in school level decision-making.

Impact

While the inclusion of all staff in a variety of teams empowers all teachers to work collaboratively towards the attainment of school-wide goals, team collaborations and distributed leadership moves have not yet yielded significant positive impact on teacher practice and decisions that affect learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are required to work in professional learning teams. The principal indicated that teams engage in a variety of professional development activities on Mondays. Separate teams comprised of kindergarten to grade 1, grade 2, grade 3, and grades 4 and 5 staff respectively, meet weekly on Mondays, focusing on improving student learning through improved instruction grounded in Common Core aligned curricula. All teachers, academic intervention service providers and pupil personnel team members collaborate with administrators, network coaches, school based coaches and other teacher leaders, who help provide support with data analysis, instructional resources and next steps to improve teaching and learning.
- With guidance from administrators as well as a literacy coach, a math coach, other teacher leaders and consultants, teacher teams engage in ongoing refinement of units of study. Team members stated that they regularly engage in reflection on teaching practices and strategies, collaboratively identify and address trends in data and chart next steps to improve student mastery of Common Core aligned goals and expectations. Teams are currently in the process of reviewing unit maps for this year to inform revisions of performance tasks and activities within the units of study for the next school year. However, due to reported and observed breakdowns in the school’s assessment program and practices, a lack of access to comparative, accurate and comprehensive assessment data impedes teacher team efforts to accelerate staff and student progress towards school goals, including effective implementation of Common Core aligned instruction in all content areas and grades.
- Teachers identified as instructional leaders serve as grade leaders and/or members of teams such as the School Improvement, Positive Behavior Intervention Support, Family Engagement, Measures of Student Learning, and Instructional Leadership Team. The school is restructuring to extend teacher teamwork via the addition of more professional learning time on Mondays, with teachers providing professional learning to each other, and biweekly learning sessions on Tuesdays to allow grade teams to focus specifically on student work. However, while distributive leadership structures are in place, these activities and plans are still in an emergent phase and not yet fully informed by teacher voice.