



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 161 The Crown

Elementary-Middle School K161

**330 Crown Street
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

Principal: Michael Johnson

**Date of review: March 17, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

The School Context

The Crown is an elementary-middle school with 537 students from grade kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 76% Black, 11% Hispanic, 03% White, 07% Asian students and 03% multi-cultural students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 16% 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 92.0%.

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 | 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 | 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 | Proficient |

Area of Celebration

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

School leaders and staff model and convey high expectations to each other, as well as to students and parents to reinforce the school's positive culture. Teachers communicate high expectations for all students and offer detailed feedback.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability. Students receive clear and effective feedback from the staff that includes a unified set of high expectations for academic performance and codes of conduct. Students understand their next steps for growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Expectations are communicated through the school goals. Classroom expectations are aligned to the Danielson Framework. Teachers receive feedback from the principal and assistant principal based on school goals and the instructional focus which is clearly articulated in the staff handbook, faculty conferences and one on one meetings.
- The school holds a Spirit Day Celebration the first Friday of every month to recognize students, staff and parents for their accomplishments. Students are awarded for their achievements in academics, attendance and character. There is also an Honor Roll, Student of the Month and a Principal and Assistant Principal Award for progress and achievement on interim assessments.
- Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) sets clear expectations for student behavior. It also reinforces respect and citizenship and builds college and career readiness skills including study skills and goal setting.
- Teachers use protocols and rubrics for analyzing student work. Students have checklists and exemplars to follow to ensure they understand what a four looks like and how to get there. Students articulated their goals and how to improve their performance to achieve higher levels.
- Parents receive information on promotional criteria for each grade at the beginning of the year during curriculum night. They also receive newsletters and updates on the school website. Progress reports are distributed three times a year in addition to report cards. There is continual communication from teachers to parents regarding their child's reading levels and progress in all subject areas. Eighth grade students receive support on high school articulation process and 7th graders learn what is expected for high school to prepare them.
- Students are exposed to enrichment activities on Fridays. The choices include African and Step dance, chorus, chess, drama, robotics and Spanish. Technology is also embedded throughout the school with the use of SMARTboards, laptops, and iPads. Students in the 4th and 5th grade won a STEM contest making cars from a 3D printer.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Teaching strategies do not consistently lead to critical thinking. Students are not always engaged in meaningful tasks and rich discussions. The development of high quality supports and extensions into the curricula to challenge all students is still a work in progress resulting in limited engagement in higher-order tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal articulated the school's core belief about how students learn. He stressed the importance of differentiation based on where students are and engagement in rigorous and meaningful tasks. The focus is on student voice and discussion and ensuring teachers use the rigor protocol and Depth of Knowledge when planning lessons. However, this is still a work in progress and most of the classrooms did not reflect this practice. Most of the classes observed were teacher-directed.
- There was little evidence of student work products or discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. Most teachers did not promote meaningful discussions using team talk or text-based discussions that are part of the Ready Gen Curriculum. During the fourth grade lesson on analyzing the problem and resolution of the legend *How the Stars Fell into the Sky*, the teacher asked "based on the text, why was it important to write the laws?" Several students responded but there was little discussion and missed opportunities for student to engage in peer to peer conversations and/or generate their own questions.
- The differentiation of tasks and instructional strategies are not uniform. In one 4th grade class there were six groups including an advanced group that was assigned an extended activity. Students created a list of places where First Woman could write laws based on what they read. They used scaffolds such as T-charts and close reading strategies. However, in other classrooms observed most students had the same problems and/or reading assignment. For example, a math activity on finding the total values of collections of dimes nickels and pennies was not challenging for many of the students.

Additional Findings

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

School leaders and faculty integrate the instructional shifts and design tasks that challenge students to think, write and problem solve. Planning for engagement and instructional coherence across the curriculum using student data is consistent across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, all students are engaged in tasks that emphasize rigor and higher-order skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes ReadyGen and Go math for all grades. The school continues to make adjustments based on data and revises curriculum maps to further integrate social studies content. For example, after a review of assessments, teachers decided to enhance students' enduring understanding of comparing and contrasting by integrating English language arts (ELA) standards into the social studies units and developed lesson plans and tasks that focused on comparing themselves to global students around the world. They focused on a close view of school culture, practices, customs geographical locations, languages and subjects.
- Curriculum unit maps include essential questions, standards, key student learning objectives, sequence of key learning activities, texts to be used and assessments. In the 4th grade ReadyGen unit, essential questions included "How does a reader consider point of view?" and "How does a writer use experiences, narration and description to compel a reader?" Learning activities engage students in reading anchor texts, focused reading instruction, informative/explanatory writing tasks and included scaffold instruction for small groups. The performance-based assessment for the unit ask students to conduct a short investigative project on a scientist/researcher who made a difference. Students are asked to use effective research techniques and conduct internet research to find articles about the person's work and accomplishments.
- The ELA curriculum emphasizes close reading of informational texts, high level vocabulary, and finding evidence to support their answers. In all ELA classes visited students were asked to justify their answers with evidence from the text. The writing curriculum is supplemented with writing process lessons developed by the teachers. Based on student writing sample assessments, curriculum units were expanded to include mini lessons to support the teaching of writing.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Developing |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

There are common assessments in place, but results are inconsistently used across classrooms. There is little actionable feedback provided to students in terms of clear next academic steps to increase student progress. Assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers' use of a broad range of assessment data does not consistently lead to meaningful instructional planning, adjustments, interventions and supports for students. Students' needs are not consistently being met resulting in limited progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Most classrooms were typified by irregular “spur of the moment” assessments that didn’t allow the teacher to effectively make adjustments to meet students learning needs and students frequently were not aware of their next learning steps. There is little actionable feedback provided except on some student work that is posted. Checks for understanding in most cases were the completion of a worksheet or graphic organizer at the end of the lesson. Questioning is not yet used adequately as an assessment tool.
- There was no evidence of assessments and rubrics being used consistently across classrooms. Some teachers take conference notes, while others do not. Running records are taken several times a year but results are not used effectively to plan guided reading groups and/or strategy lessons to support student progress.
- Some teachers use rubrics and/or “glow & grow” comments to provide written feedback to students but the quality of feedback varies. Some teachers give meaningful feedback with next steps for improvement, while others write general comments.
- The school utilizes a Data Action Plan which is a template teachers fill out after the end of unit assessment. Chapter 4 Go Math action plan included a list of standards that needed re-teaching, names of students of major concern and small group instruction. The teachers also identified what students needed the most help with to be successful. These skills included regrouping, repeated subtraction, and division. However, the instructional plan simply states “during independent work pull aside for ten minutes to address needs.” There was no evidence that this data is being used effectively.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

Teachers and administrators set a high bar for professional collaboration, support, and leadership. There is purposeful and collaborative planning time with well-established routines for agenda setting, facilitation and protocols for reviewing student work.

Impact

A strong culture of professional learning communities has taken root with increased trust in distributed leadership, better communication about what is happening across grades and coherence of team planning work.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams update curricula, design performance tasks and norm their understanding and evaluation of student work. After analyzing testing data in ELA and math and identifying priority standards to focus on and reteach, teachers identify students to target. They continue to analyze their student’s work and monitor their progress. Teachers use data analysis worksheets that summarize student strengths as well as areas for improvement and develop next steps for growth. Teacher teams have also been working on questioning using Depth of Knowledge.
- The fourth grade teacher team analyzed student work and found that citing textual evidence was an area of focus. They brainstormed ideas and developed and modified upcoming task. They reviewed Unit 2A in ReadyGen focused on key words and discussed adding additional lessons from Journeys to support the re-teaching of strategies including point of view. They discussed students’ ability to understand what is being asked in multi-part questions and modifications and scaffolds for English language learners and students with disabilities. Their next steps included finding additional resources, models and exemplars.
- Teachers said that they feel supported by the administration and have voice in key decisions including curriculum modifications and professional development. They supplemented the ELA curriculum and integrated more social studies content and writing skills. A survey on professional development options was sent out to all teachers to ensure they had choice and input. Many teachers have taken leadership roles and conduct workshops and facilitate teacher team meetings.