



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Ida Posner School**

**Elementary - Middle School K165**

**76 Lott Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11212**

**Principal: Frances Eilers**

**Date of review: May 14, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Mauriciere de Govia**

## The School Context

The Ida Posner School is an elementary - middle school with 472 students from grade pre-k through grade 8. The school population comprises 84% Black, 12% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 30% 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 87.3%.

## 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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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

Distributive leadership structures create opportunities for teachers to engage in ongoing inquiry based professional collaboration and reflection aligned to the school's instructional goals, with a targeted focus on the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards.

### Impact

The school's commitment to distributive leadership and teacher professional growth builds a cohesive professional learning community, promotes improved teacher practice, and provides teachers with a voice in instructional decision making.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has an administrative cabinet, instructional leads and grade leaders. The grade leaders lead grade specific teams, with support from an assigned instructional lead. The instructional leads are also part of the professional development team. Through discussion of their individual grade teams and with administrators' input from observations, they participate regularly in making decisions about how professional development is planned school wide, across a specific grade band, or for individual staff members. Supporting documents such as the school's schedule, meeting agendas and minutes with next steps support this work.
- Teachers engage in professional development on Mondays and Tuesdays, afterschool, with a focus on the Teachers' College Writing Program, the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. They analyze student work and the implementation of curricula that inform their decisions about how to adjust teacher practice. The latter was observed in a teacher team meeting as the teachers prepared for the implementation of the Teachers' College Writing Program curriculum by considering pacing calendars - "How long do we spend on this unit?" - and the order and content of units as aligned to students' needs, as per one teacher's comment that, "We may have to provide different supports here for my students."
- Instructional leads meet weekly with the administration to share targeted areas for professional development based on teacher team meetings and classroom observations. A review of teacher surveys revealed that teachers are benefiting from the professional development opportunities provided to them, including the "Engagement, Enhancement, Enlightening" (EEE) intervisitation program among teams of teachers. One teacher noted, "EEE has given me an opportunity to learn some very important tools and use them in my classroom. It has also given me a cause to re-evaluate methods and ideologies I was using and supported me to make changes by taking me out of my comfort zone to see things with fresh eyes." Another teacher stated; "The Triple E program has evolved into a great opportunity for teachers to participate in an engaging and professional discussion about teaching practices among various grade levels."

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

While the school has aligned pedagogical expectations with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and teachers provide some instructional supports, there is inconsistency in the emphasis on higher order thinking skills and the use of instructional scaffolds and multiple entry points that promote in-depth analysis, deepen student engagement and enrich classroom discussions.

### Impact

Across classrooms, although teachers are beginning to implement academic supports to yield meaningful student work products, there are missed opportunities for all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to engage in high level discussions and create meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, most of the lessons were teacher-centered and students responded to teacher-generated oral questions, with the dialogue being teacher-student-teacher-student during full-class discussions. Additionally, students were not engaged in peer-to-peer discussions and students were not observed generating their own questions or responding directly to their peers. Furthermore many questions were at a recall level and relied on a student's memory. For example, in a grade 3 classroom, the teacher was observed calling the students one by one to the board to solve math problems and then eliciting choral responses and one-to-one responses from students as to whether the presenting student got the problem correct.
- Across classrooms, although students' desks were arranged in groups, supports such as visuals, manipulative materials and native language resources were not widely available to further engage English Language Learners and students with disabilities in the lessons. In a self-contained classroom the students were observed using the same math worksheet, with no manipulatives or supports to help them through the lesson. A similar practice was observed in a grade 5 classroom, where the students received little to no support or scaffolds via modeling, graphic organizers or shared writing strategies to guide them write an essay.
- In some classrooms, students participated in small group activities. For example in a kindergarten class observed during a reading lesson, students worked in small table groups and were given the choice of graphic organizers to use while responding to a text. However, students were not challenged; they were copying the teacher's model and not adding their own thinking in answering low level questions and activities, while the teachers worked alongside the most struggling learners. Similarly, during a first grade Integrated Co-Teaching math class the students were divided into three groups working at different levels, using manipulatives towards an understanding that the two digits of a two digit number represent the place value concept of tens and ones. In both classes the task for the student groups lacked rigor and did not meet the needs of the lowest level learners or the highest level learners. It was also observed that as the groups completed their tasks they waited for teacher direction before moving on.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The instructional team is in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and developing engaging and rigorous tasks for all learners across grades and content areas.

### Impact

Although teachers are revising curricula, the school's curricula decisions do not yet ensure coherence across content areas and grade levels, and teachers do not yet consistently provide access to rigorous curricula or high level tasks that push student thinking and promote college and career readiness for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted the New York City Department of Education's Common Core Learning Standards aligned ReadyGEN, Go Math!, CMP3, and Code X curricula and the Teachers' College Writing Workshop program. The teachers have developed a prototype that maps out how teachers are expected to use their time to execute these curricula via a balanced literacy model. Teachers' lesson plans are in the early stages of showing how the prototype is being applied. Most of the teachers' plans illustrate direct expectations from the curricula and do not show alignment to students' data based needs.
- Grade meetings across the school focus on curricula and how to align instruction to the Common Core Standards by creating higher order thinking questions and rigorous instructional activities. Teachers attend monthly professional development in grade bands at Teachers' College and are in the early stages of learning how to use the progression of writing to assess their students' level of writing in specific areas, such as "constructing leads" and "elaboration" by doing "On Demand" writing. They are developing the process of analyzing students' writing and then modifying the unit's mini lessons to meet their students' needs. At the end of the unit the expectation is that students will do a second "On Demand" writing piece. Then, once again, teachers will use rubrics to assess and analyze any growth in their students' writing. This is a practice at the school that was inconsistently observed throughout the units of study and lesson plans.
- A review of lesson plans for students with disabilities revealed that teachers are in the early stages of utilizing Universal Design for Learning. Some plans provided varied graphic organizers to scaffold the content for students but there were inconsistent opportunities for use of manipulatives in math and alternatives such as the use of technology to access curricula. Further, there was little evidence of planning for English Language Learners to be cognitively engaged.

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

The school is beginning to use common assessments to track student progress towards goals and inform curricula and instructional adjustments. However, teachers' use of "in the moment" assessments to gauge student understanding was inconsistent across classrooms.

### Impact

Although the school has implemented structures to measure learning progress through data analysis and during instruction, these practices are not consistently used to inform adjustments that meet students' academic needs, thus hindering students' mastery of learning goals and objectives.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses common assessments that include state tests, Measures of Student Learning selections, pre, mid and post unit tests, performance tasks, writing samples and exit slips. The school has gathered targeted information from these assessments in attempts to monitor student progress towards goals and inform adjustments to curricula and/or instruction. However these practices are not streamlined or evaluated for their impact on the progress of all students. This is evident as the school leaders, teachers and students could not speak clearly about or demonstrate the connections between data findings, student outputs, and curricular decisions.
- Classroom visits and meetings with teachers indicated that the school uses ongoing assessments to group students as well as provide feedback on student work, including next steps. Students stated that teachers confer with them and give them strategies on how to improve their work. However, classroom visits also indicated that across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers do not utilize checks for understanding during instruction, to make immediate adjustments in daily lessons. For example in one math class, a small group of students were seen struggling with the task-at-hand, yet the teacher continued to teach without providing students with additional support in working towards an explanation or solution. Similarly, in a first grade math class observed, the teacher did not accurately assess whether all students understood the task, including those performing at the highest level in the group. Some of these students completed their independent activity quickly and although there was more time for independent work, there were no additional activities provided.
- An eighth grade student shared that he wanted his teachers to, "Talk less, and let us do more." This sentiment was shared by other students who voiced that their teachers are very supportive but do not allow them to show what they know. This opinion was also aligned to data from observed lessons, which revealed that students rarely had an opportunity to self-assess and share new findings as they completed tasks. Across classrooms, students were observed having to wait for teachers to confer with them about their progress and success on tasks.

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

The school is in the process of establishing a culture of learning that communicates high expectations for all staff and students and is developing clear and consistent expectations for students to be on a path to college and career readiness.

### Impact

Structures and systems for consistent and effective communication of high expectations for teaching and learning are not yet evident across the school. Students and parents do not receive consistent access to accurate information and detailed feedback on students' next steps, as aligned to college and career readiness goals for students at each grade level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School staff members are building a culture of professional collaboration by creating, implementing and modifying the EEE program whereby teachers and supervisors are involved in peer observations as well as providing feedback based on targeted competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. All teachers are part of a rotation schedule and once a teacher or a supervisor is identified within the rotation, he/she plans and teaches a lesson on his/her own. The group which includes paraprofessionals, teacher peers and supervisors, then views this lesson, taking low inference notes based upon the selected instructional competencies being assessed. The EEE group then debriefs their findings after the lesson.
- Students inconsistently benefit from strong partnerships with teachers and school leaders. Specifically, students in seventh and eighth grade indicated that this year, more than in the past, teachers have been working harder to prepare them for the next grade. One student who is new to the school shared that at first she was not interested in what was going on in class because it was boring but now some teachers are changing the way they teach and making the lessons more interesting. Another student shared that she enjoys student ownership of lessons in classes that use the Socratic seminar approach. However, this is not the norm across most classes. In addition, during the student meeting some students stated that they are not always challenged by the work across their various subject classes.
- Parents agreed that the teachers support students and want to see their children go to college. However the observed classrooms and guidance supports surfaced misalignments between articulation of high expectations and implementation of the related required actions with the clarity and preparation needed to demonstrate high expectations that take students to the next level. For example, during classroom observations, when teachers were asked about students who were off task, isolated from the whole group, or struggling, the teachers shared statements such as, "He's a challenge so he's working by himself." "I'm going to work with him later." "They know what to do, because I showed them." Furthermore, most parents and students interviewed were not able to articulate structures, beyond contact with the classroom teacher, to access information about school expectations and academic progress of students. In addition, eighth grade students shared that there were limited experiences and support offered with the high school selection and application process.