



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ralph A. Fabrizio School

Elementary 20K170

**7109 Sixth Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11209**

Principal: Mr. Zhen Wu

**Date of review: December 2, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Debra R. Lamb, Ed.D.**

The School Context

The Ralph A. Fabrizio School is an elementary school with 936 students from Kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 1% Black, 20% Hispanic, 36% White, and 43% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96%.

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 | Well Developed |
| 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 | Additional Findings | Well Developed |
| 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 | Focus | Proficient |
| 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 | Well Developed |
| 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 | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide quality training to help meet these expectations. Expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness are effectively communicated to families.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations exists among staff and families in support of college and career readiness expectations for students.

Supporting Evidence

- “You have to be the master of curriculum, not the slave to curriculum,” stated Principal Zhen Wu, a message he communicates to his teachers addressing his expectation that they exercise professional discretion in their instructional decisions based on student needs. Teachers participated in professional development on the “backwards design” model, which focuses on identifying the desired results and then working backwards to develop instructional strategies and learning experiences to achieve the outcomes desired, as well as Understanding by Design® (UbD™), which provides a blueprint for designing instruction to meet the needs of all students. Teachers stated, “We’re really fortunate...Principal Wu asks a lot of us. He’s demanding and has high expectations.” They also talked about acting as facilitators for student learning and defined rigor as “something that challenges but is achievable.” “It’s hard for some students to understand that they’re not going to get it right away, particularly the high achieving students,” said a teacher. “But it’s amazing on the third day when they get it.”
- “This school is more challenging than my old school, particularly in math,” said a student. “The teachers let you do it on your own, and challenge you after you’re finished your work with enrichment activities. Teachers also use kids as role models for other kids.” Students in Kindergarten housed in the school’s annex visit with first graders in the main building. Students participate in such programs as PENCIL’s business partnerships, a financial literacy initiative, and fourth and fifth graders who serve as Young Ambassadors.
- “There are many ways of knowing how well my son is doing in school, including working with my child to see what he knows or subjects where he is lacking,” said a parent. “If my son is not doing well, the teacher lets me know,” said another parent. “I received a call from his teacher a month ago saying my son needed to raise his hand more.” Another parent said, “My son has special needs. In his other school, he was in a self-contained second-grade class but this year he’s in a third-grade ICT (Integrated Co-Teaching) class with OT (Occupational Therapy) and PT (Physical Therapy). His test results have improved a lot.” “This is a very diverse school with every ethnic group represented,” said Principal Wu. “It’s not easy but here we are a united community.” Parents agreed and said that the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings are very well attended. Parents are invited monthly to read to students during class in their native languages. There is also a day dedicated to engaging fathers. We have teachers who are fluent in Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish, and the school has parents who translate for other parents. “Teachers give you strategies to work with your child both in person and by notes sent home,” said a parent. “When you come here, the staff smiles and I know their names,” said another parent. “That helps you keep the good mood up so that you’re not afraid to ask questions.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Common assessments are used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The results of assessments are used to make effective curricula and instructional adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are in the process of aligning assessments to instructional goals. The Fountas & Pinnell (F&P) benchmarks are used in the early grades to determine students' independent and instructional reading levels and as the Measure of Student Learning (MoSL) in Kindergarten through grade two. Performance based assessments (PBAs) within ReadyGEN® and GO Math! together with a variety of embedded tasks and rubrics are also used. "We have our own Scantron® system," said Principal Wu. "Every test is scanned and item analysis reports are sent to each teacher by email." Using Item skill analyses, teachers notice patterns across student responses to test questions and pinpoint skills students find challenging and concepts that require more classroom attention.
- Teachers use answers to word problems and written explanations to assess student understanding of skills taught. Teachers also check for understanding using questioning and discussion techniques, as well as, quick and simple ways like the thumbs up/down signal, which allows students to communicate their degrees of understanding. In a second-grade classroom, students read "A Chair for My Mother," by Vera B. Williams. The teacher asked, "Who bought things for the family after the fire? Go back into the book and put your finger on the answer. Thumbs up when you're ready." In a third-grade ICT classroom, students engaged in solving a GO Math! problem, raised their thumbs to show agreement with an answer given by a peer to the teacher's question. Exit tickets are used in many classrooms. At the end of a grade two GO Math! lesson, for example, a second-grade student solved the following problem on his exit slip: $54 + 23 = 77$. The second grader was then prompted to explain how he got his answer and to create and solve his own two-digit addition problem. A fourth-grade student's exit slip required her to use basic facts and place value to find the quotients for 56 by 8, 360 by 6, and 4,500 by 9. She then needed to explain how patterns and place values helped her.
- A student defined a rubric as "...a paper that has stuff that you need in your writing. You give it to a friend and change papers. If you don't have what's on the rubric, your friend makes an 'X'." Teachers stated that peer assessment is encouraged and is happening more frequently this year, and that peer feedback "...has become more detailed than simply 'good or nice'." Students use checklists for writing, editing, and self-assessment. Teachers regularly monitor progress with checklists. For example, a second-grade teacher engaged in monitoring a guided reading group of students used a checklist to track and comment on each student's academic behaviors, highlighting such literacy skills as "relates text to others previously read" or "rereads to search for meaning and accuracy."

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in the school's curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades. Teachers plan and refine curricula and academic tasks using student work and data.

Impact

All learners, including English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, the lowest- and highest-achieving students, have access to the curricula and tasks, must demonstrate their thinking, and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Principal Wu articulated the school's desire to dedicate more time to discussion within the choice of reading program to strengthen student comprehension of complex text and writing from sources. The ReadyGEN™ program for literacy is being implemented in grades two through five. In the lower grades, the *Journeys Common Core* program is used, which Principal Wu said "...provides many more scaffolds and differentiation for English language learners than ReadyGEN™." Principal Wu added: "The text complexity of the *Journeys* program is closest to ReadyGEN™ so the transition for students will be smooth." Foundations® is used to strengthen phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling. In addition, digital resources and materials are downloaded from Reading A-Z and the weekly classroom news magazine called "TIME for Kids" to supplement reading instruction.
- The school has invested in Junior Great Books®, a strong inquiry-based literacy program that refines and extends students' skills in reading, thinking, and communicating. Teachers particularly like the character components like trust, honesty, integrity, and perseverance within the theme-based Junior Great Books® lessons, which complements the school's Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program. To strengthen student ability to make sense of word problems within mathematics, the school is implementing GO Math!™ and is supplementing this program with interactive digital resources for math practice from IXL Learning®. Other digital resources used for intervention, enrichment, and engagement include *Raz-Kids*, MyOn®, and Class Dojo. *Harcourt Social Studies* is implemented in Kindergarten through grade five. *Harcourt Science* is implemented in grades two through five and Full Option Science System™ (FOSS) Science for Kindergarten and grade one.
- Teachers use the three-stage backwards design curriculum design process within the UbD™ framework to clarify unit goals and design related assessments. Teacher teams, following regular review of unit goals, student work, and assessment data, make curricular and instructional adjustments collaboratively. For example, the fourth-grade teacher team described how a graphic organizer for main idea was changed to a graphic organizer for cause and effect, based on their assessment of student needs. Teachers actively use UDL principles to create instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for all learners.

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

Impact

Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs based on the results of the common assessments. Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- “The range of student needs is so wide here that a “few sizes fit all” doesn’t work in this school,” said Principal Wu of the diverse instructional strategies used by most teachers to address the varied learning styles of their students. Understanding by Design® (UbD™) training has helped teachers to think deeply about lesson planning, assessment practices, scaffolds and extensions to promote high-levels of student thinking. There has been a school-wide investment in teacher training aligned primarily to eight targeted components of the Framework for Teaching, which have focused the professional conversations, development, coaching, and evaluation of teachers. The alignment of each teacher’s exemplary practices with evidence specific to the lesson evidence and specific Framework for Teaching components is documented during supervisory observations. This has been particularly important given the significant number of new teachers acquired during this school year. Each new teacher has been paired with one of four instructional coaches based on observation and need. Coaches meet with new teachers to co-plan and reflect upon lessons, and regularly observe, co-teach, and demonstrate pedagogical strategies.
- Intervisitations among teachers and collaborative team meetings have encouraged the free flowing sharing of ideas and have been a major component of the school’s professional learning cycles. Each grade engaged in three cycles of intervisitations focused on different domain components of the Framework for Teaching. In addition, all teachers have been trained and are fully certified in the use of SMART® technology to engage students in interactive learning activities and promote accessibility across classrooms. “We’re given all the resources we need,” said a teacher. “We’re pushed...sometimes out of our comfort zone. But we’re never in it alone...there’s definitely a sense of community.”
- Across classrooms, teachers ask questions to guide instruction, activate higher order thinking, and challenge students. For example, a fifth-grade teacher focused her ReadyGEN™ lesson on the text entitled “Operation Clean Sweep,” based on a true women’s suffrage story about women elected to office in 1916 in Umatilla, Oregon. The teacher framed the following evidence-based questions to support close reading of the text by three of four tables of students: “Why didn’t Otis believe Corn when he told him that the women in town were running for political office?” and “How do the women plan to win the election?” “What questions do you have?” was the prompt given to the fourth student group: One student group asks, “Why can’t the women tell anyone in town about the election?” Another student responds, “Because the men will try to stop the women from voting.” The teacher asked this group, “How does the writer establish the historical context?” A student responded, “It took place in a small town in Oregon beginning in the 1860s. You can tell it’s a while ago because women didn’t vote then.”

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| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

Distributed leadership enables collaborative teacher teams to undertake systematic analyses of key elements of teacher work, including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work.

Impact

There have been shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. There is effective teacher leadership with teachers playing an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Administrators, grade leaders and teachers collaborate as members of the school's professional learning communities (PLCs) as members of teams and engage in cycles of planning, action, assessment, and reflection. Classroom teachers articulate with cluster teachers during common prep periods. "Last year we had a classroom management problem, so we planned professional development for this fall around a shared book entitled "The Classroom Management Book," said Principal Wu.
- Eight fourth-grade teachers reflected on a peer intervisitation recently conducted and shared feedback of the math lesson they observed. Team members told of listening to a group of students and commented on the level of respect that existed among the students as they worked through a problem together. "Kids were engaged in critical thinking questions and explaining the 'whys'," said one teacher. In addition to meeting every Monday and Tuesday, this team also has a common prep period daily.
- Minutes of meetings document teacher team conversations. Using a discussion protocol for their cycles of collaborative peer learning, teachers respond to such questions as: "What was the learning activity? What was the expected student-learning outcome? How were students grouped for this lesson and why? What worked well? Was there anything you would do differently? What were some misconceptions or confusions observed during this lesson? What were some strategies students used to persevere through problems? Were questioning and discussion used to advance higher-level thinking? What was observed during the share portion of the lesson? And how were the exemplary teacher practices incorporated into the lesson?"