

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 179 The Kensington

**Elementary School K179
202 Ave C
Brooklyn
NY 11218**

Principal: Bernadette Amato

**Date of review: May 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino**

The School Context

PS 179 The Kensington is an elementary school with 971 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 26% Hispanic, 15% White, and 54% Asian students. The student body includes 49% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

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	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school systematically conveys high expectations to staff, parents and students through effective and consistent communication, holding staff accountable through purposeful staff professional development linked to teacher practice. The school successfully partners with families communicating expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Numerous professional development opportunities that provide learning and follow-up assessment create a high-degree of mutual accountability among staff members towards achievement of set expectations. Students benefit from successful school-family partnerships that provide them support in achieving career and college-ready skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The professional development committee uses surveys to monitor professional learning practice through teacher-created and delivered sessions tailored to teachers' needs. Teacher recommendations for targeted professional learning sessions are updated monthly and revisions are noted in the staff handbook annually. Topics provided include planning, developing curricula, analyzing student work, providing effective feedback, and using embedded formative assessment. Teachers inter-visit, co-plan and strengthen professional practices through these collaborations. The school is focusing on Danielson Framework for Learning Domains 1: planning and preparation, and 3: instruction. The principal consistently sends weekly communiqués to faculty underlining classroom expectations including Danielson tips and trends reflected from current classroom walkthroughs.
- The school's "Learning Leaders" program provides opportunities for families to partner, volunteer, and participate in classrooms. For example, parents are trained to assist classroom teachers in small group assessment and task completion.
- The school creates a monthly parent newsletter to share student progress and community news. Additionally, a school website is used to provide the school community with information and details about important upcoming events. Families receive communication via PupilPath, a cloud-based website that gives families and students updates on grades, assignments, and direct communications from faculty. Additionally, families receive newsletters, phone calls, and progress reports. Workshops are provided to help parents plan and support their child in their next learning steps, such as supporting literacy in the home and help with fractions. Parents shared that this information was helpful and provided them with an opportunity to learn as well as knowledge of the path to college and career readiness. Family Literacy Nights are held monthly to promote literacy in the home.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

In some classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and inconsistently provide students with time for meaningful student-to-student discussion or work products.

Impact

Across classrooms, inconsistent instructional practices result in lost instructional opportunities for students, including English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities, to engage in challenging tasks, demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, or demonstrate high-levels of participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has departmentalized fifth grade to provide a more specialized experience in English language arts (ELA) and math for students that better reflects the middle school environment and structure.
- In second and third grade ELA and fourth grade math, teachers used methods to call on non-volunteers and increase student voice. For example, in third grade ELA lesson, the teacher used Popsicle sticks with students' names on them to randomly select students to answer and increase accountability and student voice. However this practice was not evident across grades and subjects. In a second grade ESL and a fourth grade math the teachers called on the same two to three student volunteers, leaving several students disengaged. In several classes, questioning discussions were limited to one student responses and teachers did not call on non-volunteers or attempt to include more students into the discussion. For example, in a grade three ELA lesson the teacher repeated student answers or made affirmative statements including "good job" without requiring other students to extend the response or state if they agreed or disagreed and why. Yet, in a second grade ELA and a fourth grade math class, teachers directed students to share their partners' responses at the conclusion of turn and talks providing students with mutual accountability and ownership of student to student discussions. However, this practice was not observed across grades and subjects.
- In some classes, student-to-student discussion was heard. For example, in ESL ICT class the teacher asked students to identify details from writing exemplars and turn-and-talk about their responses. All students were engaged. However, in other classes teachers dominated lessons in a few classes and never stepped out of the central role. For example, in one third grade ELA classroom, the time devoted to the teacher directed mini lesson eclipsed the time provided for students to engage in the task. As such, some opportunities for student-to-student discussions and collaborative activities were lost.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers analyze student data to create assessments, rubrics, and checklists that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

School wide assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. The school consistently uses assessment results to make adjustments to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers design rubrics, checklists, tasks and assessments aligned with the school's curricula, Ready Gen and Go Math. Self-assessment checklists noting if students wrote about an idea, used vocabulary from the word wall or stretched out words were seen in use in several classrooms. In a fifth grade English language arts classroom, students created a "Twitter-Box" self-assessment to illuminate their noticings and record further questions about the use of text-based evidence.
- The school uses a variety of common assessments to guide next steps. After reviewing the data from math and ELA Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessments, teachers noted that English language learners (ELLs) struggled during reading comprehension. Third grade teachers returned to the curricula and made adaptations so that more lessons and tasks had visual representations, SMARTboard presentations, and opportunities for strategic student grouping focused on reading comprehension skills. For example, third grade teachers revised mini-lesson strategies to address ELLs by designing visual presentations on SMARTboards and teaching students how to use context clues. Teachers revised unit maps, increased modeling for students and added more lessons using visual technology. Student MOSL data shows an uptick in student performance specifically for third-grade ELLs.
- The school monitors student progress using the Datacation online platform. Teachers use detailed data analysis reports including those which indicate grade level, specific standards tested and percentages correct to create flexible, student groups to reteach standards not yet mastered. Students have goals and teachers use data from common assessments including MOSL and pre and post assessments to support students to reach them. One student shared that his teacher changes groups twice per week.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry based structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

Structured professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. Teacher teamwork typically results in improvements in teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams meet at least twice a week to engage in inquiry, adapt curricular resources including tasks and rubrics, and engage in discussions about individual student performance. Team agendas note observations of student work, list strategies identified from brainstorming sessions and list next steps. For example, the fourth grade team designed a response-to-reading strategy named “RAPPS: Restate, Answer, Prove, Prove, Sum it up“, and conducted inquiry as to its impact in the classroom.
- Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share. Teams adapt and use a data analysis protocol to identify student strengths and weaknesses, record patterns and trends, and forge hypotheses on student academic growth. For example, the second grade teacher team and the administration noticed in September that students were struggling in multi-step questions and word problems. After deeper analysis, teachers uncovered that students were only completing the first step in multi-step problems. Teachers met to discuss strategies and made adjustments to curriculum to ensure student completion including underlining of text, visual cues and use of complex state exam-style questions in daily classroom activities and collaborative tasks. As a result, student performance improved on multi-step questions and word problems from teacher created and MOSL math assessments.
- Teacher teams collaboratively design on-demand writing tasks to measure student progress at the end of each unit of study in Ready Gen. These tasks aid teachers in determining student growth in both reading and writing. Teachers then analyze student essays to determine next steps in teaching writing. As a result, teacher practice in teaching the writing process has been strengthened. Teachers report that among the faculty and administration a mutual trust and ownership of learning now exists in the school due to the atmosphere of professional collaborations.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for students. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data, so that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have access and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps show that the school uses a blend of curricula and tasks from American Reader program, the New York City Department of Education Common Core library, ReadyGEN and Go Math! Reading and writing skills within content area units of study emphasize the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts across content areas, including tiered-academic vocabulary, fluency, multi-step word problem solving, argumentative writing, and text-based responses.
- Teacher teams noted that students struggled in writing on Measures of Student Learning assessments. Specifically, they experienced difficulty when writing paragraphs. Teachers adapted curricula to include more lessons on task purpose, paragraphs, use of titles, topic sentences, cloze passages, and frames.
- The majority of unit plans reviewed noted details including lesson objectives directly tied to the Common Core Learning Standards, use of Tier 1 and 2 vocabulary words, and a problem of the day. For example in second grade math, students determined the length of an object in centimeters by using unit cubes. Plans indicated specific higher-order thinking questions including, "How can you use unit cubes to measure?" and "Why do we place cubes side by side rather than face each other?"