



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**The Clarion School**

**Elementary School K205**

**6701 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11204**

**Principal: Beth Grater**

**Date of review: February 10, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Roxan Marks**

## The School Context

Clarion is an elementary school with 1154 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 20% Hispanic, 26% White, and 53% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 9% 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 95.0%.

## 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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts are integrated in units and lessons. Academic tasks foster rigorous and higher order thinking for all students enabling them to think at high levels.

### Impact

The curriculum is coherent across grades and subjects, supports college readiness and encourages all students including English language learners and Students with disabilities to think at high levels.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school curriculum ensures interdisciplinary connections integrated in English language arts and writing to provide students with deep connections to social studies and science content. For example, a fifth grade unit includes the standards and key ideas that students are required to learn. Essential questions, big ideas, skills, guided practice, assessments and vocabulary are clearly outlined. The maps also include language stems that support students that are acquiring English and those who have difficulty in oral language output. Visual representations are included in all units as well as scaffolds for English language learners to access content. Challenging content is planned that promotes active learning for all students.
- The school integrates the instructional shifts into curricula and teachers continually refine unit and lesson plans to support the deep understanding of content. There is a focus on the staircase of complexity and teachers provide time for students to engage in close reading. Teachers develop and use a Close Reading Protocol to support students in looking closely at informational and fiction texts over days to gain deeper meaning and understanding. For example, a grade one close reading lesson for a fiction text “Our House Rules” provides a shared reading, questioning, and a reread of text to focus on vocabulary. The third day affords students to read the text in trios with guided questions that are pre-planned in the protocol. On the fourth day, the text is reread in trios with a focus on text and character traits as students use textual evidence and the fifth day allows for sharing by groups.
- Teachers plan lessons that are rigorous with particular attention to multiple entry points and scaffolds are embedded in units and lesson plans. Depth of Knowledge (DOK) is used to ensure rigor and varying levels of challenge is provided in questions and tasks. Critical thinking and higher order skills are built in the maps as well as questions are planned in units and lessons. Universal Design for Learning is used to ensure access along with technology, videos, various graphic organizers, explicit teaching of targeted academic vocabulary and making connections to prior learning and content was seen in units and lessons.
- The use of IIM provides differentiated learning activities that address college and career readiness for all students. Students engage in independent research utilizing various resources and technology. Another way the school is preparing students for the next level is through collaboration and group work outlined in maps and lessons.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The vast majority of classrooms reflect a coherent set of beliefs aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional shifts. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking, participation and discussion.

### Impact

Across classrooms teachers lessons allow for students to engage in content and activities allowing them to participate in quality discussions and students ownership of learning leading to high quality work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- The majority of classrooms visited reflected the school belief that all children can learn and a review of teacher team artifacts demonstrate ongoing emphasis and support for the instructional focus while ensuring alignment to school beliefs. During visits to classes students were engaged in peer assessments and providing next steps and feedback to each other. Students worked independently and in small group activities based on data, interest and choice resulting in personalized learning. Literature circles afforded students opportunities to generate their own questions and participate in self-directed discourse with peers on texts. The school created organizers was used by students to write down notes as they summarize main points from text, draft open ended questions and answers along with page numbers noted to discuss in groups. Student work products on bulletin boards and folders reflect high standards.
- During a grade 4 English language arts lesson, students were participating in literature circles as they delved into an author study unit. There were three groups engaged in discourse using a common character trait sheet that contained notes and questions that they created. Students used accountable talk and conversation moved as student statements triggered disagreements thereby extending the talk and making it purposeful and productive for all involved. The teacher was conferencing with a student and provided a new reading goal for the student in a notebook that was to be signed by the parent.
- Across classrooms teachers were facilitators of learning, using exemplars to model and provide clear directions for students. Instruction provided an emphasis on important concepts and made connections to prior lessons. Discussions were high-level allowing students to participate in the content and having their voices heard. Discussions were taking place without the support of the teacher and when needed scaffolds provided access to engage all learners. For example, in a grade 3 classroom, the teacher provided a group of students whom required assistance with a chart with higher order questions. During this lesson, students were in groups based on prior assessment data using related multiplication facts to divide and using patterns to divide multiples of 10 and 100. The teacher had students using laptops to complete a challenge activity to extend the learning. Students discussed the problems and asked questions to peers using math vocabulary. For example, one student asked his group, how can you use an array as a model? How do you know if the number is divisible?

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

In the majority of classrooms visited teachers assessment practices are aligned to the curricula. Frequent checks for understanding are used and students engage in self and peer assessments.

### Impact

The school's use of assessment results in meaningful and actionable feedback to students affording them opportunities to take ownership of their learning and become aware of next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has a system for collection of data and the timely analysis is used to guide screening, interim measures and benchmarks as well as progress monitoring. Data is used to make curricular adjustments, identify students who require academic intervention services and to inform the formation of groups for lessons. The use of rubrics and checklist aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) provides students with specific direction while working independently or in group activities. Review of data binders in classes show ongoing data analysis on unit assessments and highlighted names of students that fell below the class average, individual conference notes and reading records are used to inform instruction.
- Teacher use checks for understanding in lessons to monitor understanding by continually taking a pulse of the classroom. For example, in a grade 3 reading lesson on traveling seeds, students were creating true and false statements based on the text. The teacher provided students with a true or false stick and used them to respond to questions posed by the teacher who was able to scan the group to check understanding of content. Another example observed in a few classrooms were the use of restating directions, questions, using dry erase boards and summarizing by other students. These practices were embedded in the classrooms and provided teachers with on the spot data to adjust lesson and guide group work.
- During a grade 2 writing lesson students were working peers and adults to strengthen their writing by using a checklist to edit their work. Students used a rubric as a guide to self-assess their piece and some were working with a partner using a checklist to review spelling, capitalization and punctuation. The list also required that examples are cited from the text includes facts and details, conclusion and use of interesting words are evident in the draft. Students relayed during the small group session that they use rubrics and checklists and the teacher highlights areas on the rubric and gives next steps to help their learning. Students stated that goals make it clear what they need to work on and choice is often afforded to them in classes. Students were able to articulate supports provided to them when they are unclear in a lesson and many shared that self-assessment and peers assist them in class.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders communicate high expectations for teaching and learning to all staff and alignment of professional learning plans to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Partnership with parents enables the school to effectively communicate high expectations for students related to college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

The school has systems and routines that foster a culture towards high expectations for all stakeholders resulting in strong partnerships with families to support and ensure student success.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The “Bottom Lines” document is used to support the expectations for staff, consisting of three short statements to serve as the instructional focus. These bottom lines include ensuring learning needs of students are met using Universal Design for Learning, consistent analysis of students work to identify gaps and adjust instruction and collaborative professional learning. The staff handbook provides legal and instructional guidance to the community. The use of the end of year professional development survey and observational data drives the plans for professional learning. Review of plans show a focus on questioning and discussion component of Danielson rubric and the staff reflection form is use by teachers and paraprofessional to share what they learned, what they will implement and a timeline for carrying out the new learning.
- The school partners with parents and provides ongoing communication through the website, newsletters, progress reports and workshops. Review of newsletters show that these documents are translated in five languages and making it accessible for all members of the diverse community. During the parent interviews, parents shared that the grade specific newsletter and class website keep them informed of events in the classrooms and school. Parents stated that curriculum meetings provide expectations for learning, information on the standards and details regarding the instructional shifts. Parents partner with school and the Parent Teacher Association; volunteering in many areas to provide support for activities and initiatives in school.
- College and career readiness are developed in students through the IIM program that engages students in independent research on topics that interest students. Strong integration of technology prepares students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as critical thinking, problem solving and collaboration in classrooms. The school is developing entrepreneurialism through the coffee shop that is managed by students. During teacher team interviews, teachers stated that providing challenging activities to foster analytical thinking in students is getting them prepared for college.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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**Findings**

The vast majority of teachers are involved in structured professional collaborations to build up teacher pedagogy. Distributive leadership structures provide a voice for teachers to provide input in various decisions in the school.

**Impact**

Participation in teacher teams and shared decision-making results in instructional coherence and increased student achievement. English language arts performance is 37%, greater than the citywide average of 30% and mathematics result are 53%, surpassing the citywide average of 39%.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers work in partnership within and across grades and subjects to adjust unit plans, curricula and plan lessons. Grade level teams share responsibility and support the bottom lines for the school and focus this year on close reading lessons and protocols. School leaders, coach and the professional learning team read “Falling In Love with Close Reading” to begin the work ahead on looking deeply in supporting teachers in close reading strategies. The team developed a protocol and videotaped a teacher as she modeled five lessons. Teachers began to use this protocol and during a lesson in a special education class the teacher was observed using the strategy. During the teacher team observation, teachers were discussing a close reading passage and ways to adjust the graphic organizer based on observations of students in class using a version they had developed. They talked about ways to adjust the chart to meet the needs of students and the team came to consensus about separating the challenge.
- The instructional team consisting of various grade level representatives, meet ongoing with school leadership to discuss pending concerns or adjustments needed to better serve students. The collaborative professional learning team provides training and support for teachers during common planning time and Monday professional development sessions. Review of team agendas show exploration of topics on Danielson, Universal Design for Learning, social studies mapping, using iPads, close reading and formative assessments.
- Distributive leadership is valued and encouraged at the school, teachers shared that school leadership inspires teachers to participate in various leadership capacities. All teachers and paraprofessionals have a voice in developing goals, input in their own learning and incorporating the feedback provided through observations. The Professional Goals Benchmark Survey allows staff to create goals and specifically identify strategies that helped them to attain their goals. Staff members are able to share with leaders and each other what areas they believe will enhance their professional growth for the upcoming year. The professional learning team analyzes these documents and incorporates the feedback to develop the learning plan.