Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Colonel David Marcus

Elementary School K217

1100 Newkirk Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11230

Principal: Franca Conti

Date of review: April 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Julia Bove

The School Context

Colonel David Marcus is an elementary school with 1263 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 11% Black, 19% Hispanic, 19% White, 48% Asian, and 3% Other students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.4%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Celebration**	**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	**Additional Findings**	**Well Developed**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Additional Findings**	**Well Developed**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Focus**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula so that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. Student work products reflect a high level of thinking. Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide high quality supports and extensions.

Impact
Across classrooms, students are engaged in challenging tasks and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence
- In a kindergarten classroom, a student was having difficulty writing the word, "brother." The teacher approached him and asked how he could find out. The student pointed to a word wall that contained anchor words. The teacher said, "Let's go look together." After using the word wall as a scaffold, the student returned to his seat and independently wrote "brother" correctly.

- In a fourth grade classroom, students were working in groups to answer the question, "How did the eruption of Mount Tambora affect the community and the environment?" Some groups focused on community and others on environment. One student stated to her group, "We do not have enough details." Another student responded, "Let's keep looking for more evidence in the paragraphs."

- In a second grade math class, students were working in groups to measure length based on pre-placed, post-it notes around the room. This preparation allowed for groups to work independently of the teacher. At the same time, the teacher was working with a group of English language learners to measure the length of the classroom bulletin board. The students were using a ruler to physically stand a meter apart and using their bodies to mark the distance along the wall.

- In a fifth grade classroom, students were presenting claims and counter claims on topics concerning animal welfare. When asked, one student stated, "We read an article about cruelty to whales. Now we need to argue our opinion and back it up with facts."

Area of Focus

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

Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze key elements such as classroom practice, assessment data, and student work with embedded leadership opportunities. Distributed leadership structures are in place and the school is in the process of increasing the capacity of individual team members.

Impact

The work of the teacher teams is evolving in shared improvements in teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students. Teachers have a voice in decisions that affect student learning across the school and they are becoming an integral role in instructional decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams meet regularly and are led by teachers. The teams meet weekly during common planning time and on Monday and Tuesday afternoons. The principal, assistant principals, and teachers all state that team meetings involve a vertical and horizontal collaboration. Teams engage in activities such as inquiry-based collaboration where they look at student work, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) selection, curriculum writing, and professional learning. Teacher teaming is leading to consistent shared improvements in teacher practice.

- Teacher teams make key decisions and revise unit plans based on student need. In many cases, the team leader takes on the bulk of this work with input from the teachers. One communication from a team leader to the team states, "I am providing you with the maps as is for your feedback while *I work to update them."*

- The observed teacher team was a pilot in collaboration with the State University of New York, Albany to pinpoint and address student behavior that may lie on the autism spectrum. Teachers, administrators, clinicians and related service providers pinpoint, discuss, and create a plan for observed student behavior according to a strict protocol. The end result will be specific strategies for individuals and groups of students reflected in lessons and unit plans.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The school ensures that engaging curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards for a variety of learners. Units and lessons are revised based on student data and their work products.

Impact
Purposeful decisions based on data and student work products result in a variety of learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, having access to curricula and tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- As fourth grade teachers looked to revising a persuasive writing unit, they looked at standards, expectation of task, and student reading levels from third grade. The area of study was changed from Europe to Asia to better fit in with human rights components of other curricular units that were being taught concurrently.

- A fifth grade lesson plan on natural disasters, included differentiated activities for students, including close reading and graphic organizers. A kindergarten unit in analyzing realistic fiction was modified based on observed student data and behavior to include grouping strategies such as modeling, stretching words, and writing mechanics.

- Examined instructional units in writing included strategies for English language learners, such as dictation, using glossaries and anchor charts, and paraphrasing a partner's response.

- A science unit on earthquakes included extended response questions that engaged higher order thinking such as, "How are people affected by an earthquake?" after students read different leveled texts on several historical earthquakes.

Quality Indicator:	**3.4 High Expectations**	**Rating:**	**Well Developed**

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward achieving those expectations toward a path to college and career readiness.

Impact
The communication of high expectations with the supports to achieve them has led to a culture of mutual accountability for all members of the school community. The school's successful partnering with families enables them to support their children's progress toward meeting expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration conveys high expectations through regular communication and professional development.   The school staff believes that rigorous and differentiated instruction is a non-negotiable part of teaching.   Thorough staff development is conducted before anything new is implemented.   School leaders use the fishbowl and jigsaw approach to ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to share what they have learned from the literature. High expectations are also conveyed through comments aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching on teacher observations.

- Parent workshops are offered to parents in grades 3, 4 and 5. Topics include Common Core Learning Standards, English language arts, and mathematics. The school's math staff developer and parent coordinator conduct workshops for parents in grades 3 and 4. The school holds Saturday workshops for English language learners and their parents on child literacy allowing for partnerships between the school and families. Additionally, the school focuses on the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills for both parents and students.

- The school issues reports on student progress three times per year in addition to other regular communication to parents. Parents and students all state that these reports along with varied types of consistent communication with the school help them to reinforce the school's high expectations and maintain a partnership with the school.

- The school hosted a building-wide career day. Within their individual classrooms, students voted to determine which professionals they would invite for a visit. Students discussed different careers and professions that interested them. Teachers and students then performed outreach to parents and community members to invite guest speakers. Students stated that they had a much better understanding of various jobs and careers after this event.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact
Teacher assessment practices in classrooms are adjusted so that all students demonstrate mastery. Students are aware of their goals and next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence
- The school's common assessment results are capture in a "student snapshot" which includes results of state test data, regular benchmark Fountas and Pinnell assessments, as well as notes on individual students and any special needs that students might have. The snapshots allow for seamless conversations about individual students across grades and subjects. Teachers check for understanding through guided reading notes and running records.

- In a kindergarten classroom, students were using an adjective chart to complete similes such as wise as a _____. Students had graphic organizers on which they were to use adjectives to describe people in their lives using similes. The teacher noticed that a full comparison was proving to be too difficult for students, so she made a decision in the moment to simply focus on adjective identification with the intention of revisiting the original activity at another time.

- A displayed reflection rubric for writing had peer and self-assessed comments such as, "You backed up your answer," "I had good detail," and "I need to use more content vocabulary."

- On a displayed piece of persuasive writing, actionable feedback included next steps:" Your writing stated an opinion and maintained it throughout your essay. Next time, use content vocabulary and more supporting details." Students in this class stated that they check each other's work and spoke to their peers' next steps.