Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 229 Dyker

Elementary-Middle School K229

1400 Benson Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11228

Principal: Robert Zappulla

Date of review: February 25, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Debra R. Lamb, Ed.D.

The School Context

P.S. 229 Dyker is an elementary-middle school with 1,174 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 11% Hispanic, 34% White, 53% Asian, and 1% other. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 13% 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 96.2%.

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**	**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	**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
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Impact
All learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The essential question in a grade 1 science class is "How can we use context clues to understand the meaning of the words *environment, industry and litter*?" The teacher read aloud to students the book *Talking about the Environment,* and the poem *The Earth Day Song*. Students were asked "How are we wasting if we're not recycling." Student responses included, "Because we can't leave the garbage on the ground" and "Because you're letting the bad smells in your house." Multiple entry points included (a) advanced students completing sentences with the vocabulary words, (b) on-level students matching the vocabulary words with the correct definition, and (c) ELL and below-level students matching the vocabulary words with the correct picture. Pedagogical strategies included making text-to-self connections, like discussing the environmental- and energy-related reasons why children in the book put on a sweater and why the family walked rather than drove.

- In an ELL dominant grade 7 science lab, students drafted hypotheses about a chemical reaction—the effects of temperature on celery, and shared their responses within groups. A student said, "I think the celery in the refrigerator will last longer because it's in a shady spot, but it might get too cold." The teacher prepared differentiated worksheets about the effect of temperature on the rate of chemical reaction for different groupings of students, including beginning and intermediate ELL students, as well as general education students.

- Groups discussed the changes in the sound of pennies varied when their number of pennies was increased and decreased. Academic vocabulary highlighted during this lesson included: *Activation energy* (the energy needed to start a reaction), *Concentration* (the amount of substance in a certain volume), and *Rate of Reaction* (how fast a reaction happens after it has started). The teacher has expressed an interest in exploring student-to-student translations for ELLs who are newcomers to the United States.

- Students were asked to talk about a piece of work they were particularly proud of. A 4th grade student described her essay that compared two bridges—the Golden Gate Bridge in the United States and one in France." An 8th grade special education student talked about the horror story he wrote, about which he said "I was excited to do it and tried very hard." A 7th grade student described her science fair project question, "How salty does water have to be for an egg to float?" "It's the highest grade I've received," she said.

Area of Focus

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

Findings
Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact
There is improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across the school have a common preparatory period each week for collaborative planning. The school is departmentalized at the beginning of grade 4. In addition to the teacher team meetings, the school has a special education team, a pupil personnel team, and a paraprofessional team. Teachers talked about having students at different levels and different strengths and challenges. For example, a 6th grade special education student was recently mainstreamed into a gifted & talented class for mathematics and is outperforming the other students. Challenging trends among students across classes are inferencing skills and following directions. "The use of checklists, graphic organizers have worked," said a middle school teacher. "Writing in bullet points works if students like the topic. From September to now, I've seen a change." The school's state assessment data reflects increases in the percentage of ELLs and SWDs scoring at Proficiency Levels 3 & 4 on the 2014 English language arts (ELA) assessment. Teachers regularly look at student work and data from such sources as exit cards and the embedded assessments in such programs as The College Board's *SpringBoard*®. "I take away so much from this process of input…it helps me grow as an educator," said a new teacher.

- Teachers defined inquiry as "an investigation into problems a student is having and an analysis of skills like the quality, length, and relevance of writing." Teachers of other teams concurred that during their meetings, a question is raised for discussion about students who are demonstrating difficulty with an identified set of skills. During a grade 4 teacher inquiry team meeting, six teachers discuss student's persuasive essay sample on the topic of child labor. Included in the meeting is the Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETTS) teacher. Team members serve in a variety of rotating roles, including facilitator, documenter, presenter, and contributors. The question discussed was, "How can we help this student build a stronger essay?" Teachers noticed that the student never stated his point of view in this sample.

- At the end of each school year, school administration disseminates a questionnaire to teachers requesting volunteers as grade leaders. A coach serves as a mentor to teachers. The school hosts student teachers from Touro College and St. John's University on Staten Island, as well as college students who earn observation hours—part of the new state education requirements.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous tasks and higher-order skills across grades and subjects, and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
A diversity of learners, including ELLs and SWDs, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is implementing *GO Math!*® (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) in kindergarten through grade 8. The ELA program in the lower elementary grades is *Imagine It! Reading* (SRA/McGraw-Hill), which is similar to *Treasures Reading* (MacMillan/McGraw-Hill) used in the upper elementary grades. The school selected these programs because they focus on phonics and foundational skills in language in the tradition of *Open Court Reading* (SRA/McGraw-Hill), its prior successful program. Teachers found the writing component of *Imagine It! Reading* to be weak. To enhance the writing process in the elementary grades this year, the school began using *Strategies for Writers Conventions & Skills* (Zane-Bloser) in kindergarten through grade 2. In the middle grades, the school currently has *ReadyGEN*™ (Pearson Education), however teachers were dissatisfied with the program and re-wrote the teachers' guides and created PowerPoint presentations of revised content to better meet student needs. Some of the literature from *ReadyGEN*™ continues to be used as anchor texts on some grades. The school uses *Code X* (Scholastic) program together with their own teacher-created literature anthology. Teachers have added project-based and inquiry-based activities, such as writing memoirs or letters to the authors.

- Teachers vary the level of rigor with differentiated texts and scaffolds in lessons for ELLs, SWDs and students in the school's gifted & talented classes. English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers meet with teachers of all content areas to discuss strategies to assist ELLs, like putting pictures next to words. Technology components, like videos and BrainPop®, are integrated into lessons, particularly in self-contained special education classes. Teachers like the real-life situations and nonfiction text incorporated within *Code X*, but said that the content is not as rigorous for their gifted & talented students. Teachers also said that *Code X* also has less online supports than *ReadyGEN*™. Project-based learning activities and extra chapters have been added to the curriculum in a special self-contained superintendent's class for 8th graders who will take the Living Environment Regents Exam. An 8th grade student proudly stated, "I'm learning 10th grade material." Programs like *Wilson Fundations*® and *Wilson Just Words*® are implemented with students who need intervention.

- During Monday collaborative meetings, teachers review content and strategies based upon data from student work, item analyses, and anecdotes. Grade-level and cluster teams worked on pacing of the units of study and refinement of rubrics to support alignment with the school's instructional focus on evidence-based writing in response to informational text. Teachers who were familiar with writing programs like *Teachers College Reading & Writing Project* used at other schools have also incorporated components of these programs.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curriculum and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement is provided. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has always considered the reading levels of texts and complexity of thought to be highly based on Lexile® Levels. Teachers concluded that a performance level of 4 in the *ReadyGEN*™ program is equivalent to a proficiency level of 3 on the state test. Therefore, teachers are actively constructing new rubrics across every grade and subject to support mastering evidence-based writing. They are also working to improve the exemplars highlighted as model work for students. Portfolio cover sheets are a new procedure used across classrooms. These cover sheets identify the month a unit started, the name of the unit, benchmarks identifying what students will be able to do, the associated Common Core Standard(s), and the student's rubric score.

- Teachers' incorporate checks for understanding to help assess achievement of instructional goals and objectives, such as analyzing exit cards, classroom observation, and student responses to questions and participation in discussions. For example, the aim of a lesson plan for an 8th grade math class was "To find the solution to a system of linear equations by elimination." Students completed the following exit card for this lesson: "Consider the system of linear equations ($x + 3y = 8$ and $x – 4y - -6$). 1. Add or subtract the equations to eliminate a variable. 2. Solve for the variable that is remaining. 3. Solve for the other variable. 4. Write the solution as an ordered pair. 5. Verify your solution by graphing. 6. How can you decide whether to add or subtract to eliminate a variable in a linear system? Explain your reasoning." Checklists identifying areas of mastery for individual students are maintained by teachers. Teachers adjust instruction according to these informal assessments practices.

- Students report that they use rubrics for self-assessment and for partner assessment during the editing process. "Rubrics tell you what to do to get the highest score," said one student. Another student said his teacher often tells the class, "I want you to only look at Level 4 and aim high." In response to a question about how students know they are doing well, middle grade students said, "The student version of PupilPath.com accumulates our average and allows us to see how we're doing." An elementary grade student responded, "Your score tells you. If you know a lot of the answers on a test, then you fly by it." Feedback to students is detailed and concrete. For example, a rubric was used by a teacher to evaluate a persuasive writing assignment used the following 5-point Likert scale to assess 10 attributes of the student's writing skills: "1 = Weak, 2 = Moderately Weak, 3 = Average, 4 = Moderately Strong, and 5 = Strong." The narrative feedback to this student included both areas of strength—"your introduction describes the main points in your essay and your third paragraph has wonderful points that support your topic sentence," and next steps.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families to support student progress towards those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact
Students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level. Students receive clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports.

Supporting Evidence

- Background experiences for students are important to this school community. Enrichment choices are offered to students on such topics as journalism, cooking, and banking. This year, classes visited the National Museum of Mathematics in Manhattan and the Apple Store. Classes learning about immigration visited the Tenement and Holocaust Museums. The school will be initiating a *GO Math!*® Academy for parents in March, which will explain the program's approach and will engage parents and children together in math games and other activities. Teacher-created pages on e-Chalk also support home-school communication. Teachers take the time to call parents with positive accolades about their students. A parent whose son has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) proudly shared that her son made the principal's honor roll.

- Kindergarten through grade 2 teachers were trained by Bank Street College in Emotionally Responsive Practice. Two students per class for grades 6, 7 & 8 serve on the school's Student Leadership Council. These student representatives work with the school's guidance counselor and social worker on resolution strategies for their peers. They meet during lunch each Wednesday. These students are also involved in all of the school's community service activities, like "No Name Calling Week" and painting the neighborhood store windows for Halloween. The school has "Spirit Days" each month, during which students wear colored shirts commemorating their support for a cause, like red for heart disease.

- To prepare students for college and career, "I bring my own experiences in to the classroom and tell students, 'Don't stop learning'" said an 8th grade teacher. Middle school students have visited the campuses of the College of Staten Island and Brooklyn College, where they attended a violinist performance. In March, corporate employees who volunteer with Junior Achievement plan to visit and share their wisdom with students in kindergarten through grade 4. The school has a new partnership with Junior Achievement, a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to inspire and educate young people to succeed in a global economy. In June, grade 6 students will be participating in financial literacy and students in grade 8 will meet with college students from New York University in the spring, all through Junior Achievement. Last year, the school invited high school alumni to speak with 5th grade and middle school students during Regents week. Early-grade students received library cards through the school's partnership with the Brooklyn Public Library's *Kidsmobile*, a children's library on wheels. A grant-related partnership with the nonprofit organization *Learning through an Expanded Arts Program (LeAp)* facilitates the presence of a teaching artist in the school twice weekly from October through June to work with kindergarteners.