



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Caton School

Elementary School K249

**18 Marlborough Road
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

Principal: Elisa Brown

**Date of review: March 31, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shenean N. Lindsay**

The School Context

PS 249 is an elementary school with students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 41% Black, 49% Hispanic, 4% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

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	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		
<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	Focus	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

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Most classroom student work products, and discussions reflect high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership which result in multiple entry points, high quality supports, and extensions into the curricula so all learners are engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- A fourth grade English Language Arts class participated in a game of Jeopardy. The teacher set up the screen similar to a Jeopardy board and asked students to select a participant. Once the participant was selected, the student watched a short video with classmates. Then, the question was posed, "What is the main message/theme of this Pixar short?" The student was given an option to answer the question independently or with peers. Then, students had to share their response with the student caucus using evidence from the video to justify their answers. Afterwards, the response was shared with the class; another student uncovered the response on the screen and gave points to students who answered questions correctly.
- Students were observed participating in *Poster Math* in a fifth grade class. Students created learning goals for themselves, and then analyzed a problem from a poster displayed by the teacher independently. Afterwards, the students shared their answer with peers. Students who are in need of problem solving assistance, seek assistance from peers who are considered "experts". Students also referenced their student toolkit for supports. Once the student solved the problem, it was shared with his/her group. The teacher took notes as students shared their answers.
- During a kindergarten math class, students questioned one another about strategies used to solve a problem. The teacher served as a facilitator. One student asked another student, "Why did you land on five in your number line? The student responded, "Because five left." Another student asked, "How do you know the answer is five?" Students in a kindergarten classroom created their own questions, which guided discussions amongst one another. The teacher served as a facilitator and took notes as the students questioned one another.
- Three days a week (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday) students participate in small group instruction school-wide. During small group instruction, students engage in prevention, intervention, or enrichment activities. All staff in the school support small groups. For example, the physical education teacher provided supports to students on the topic of Question-Answer-Relationships using a teacher toolkit. The teacher used one of the strategies in his toolkit, *Turn and Talk*. Students responded to several questions posed by the teacher with their peers as the teacher took notes. Another group was given a choice of tasks to complete using software IXL.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. The staff provides effective feedback and supports to ensure students are prepared for the next level.

Impact

The professional community exists within a culture of mutual accountability and ownership of high expectations. Students own their educational experience connected to college and career readiness. However, parents are unclear of expectations related to Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader shares expectations through the distribution of a staff handbook at the beginning of the school year. The school leader frequently revisits and makes adjustments to the handbook throughout the school year. Several teachers mentioned during interviews that when a teacher is not fulfilling an expectation, the school leader completes a Request Form and gives it to the teacher. The teacher is told what needs to be done and given a deadline. It is also written in an Accountability Log in which the school leader tracks requests.
- During an interview, several teachers stated that whenever a teacher is in need of support; they are responsible for supporting one another through conducting inter-visitations. A support log is kept by all teachers. Then, follow-up observations take place first by teachers, then administrators to ensure there is a shift of practice. Another teacher stated, "We get different ideas for instruction through visiting one another."
- There are school-wide initiatives such as Positive Behavior Intervention Support and "Cool Culture" which sets behavior expectations for learning and rewards positive student behavior. Posters can be seen throughout the school with the *3 Bee's – How to Behave in School*. The poster is revisited when students misbehave. There is also a *B-Bucks* incentive for positive behavior. One student stated during interviews, "One time my class got 10 *Bee Proud Cards*. The principal gave a pizza party for the entire class to acknowledge their positive behavior."
- During interviews with students, several stated there is a school government. Students are responsible for creating their own agenda and maintaining minutes from the meetings. Student's follow-up with administration and teachers to share concerns. For example, every morning students make morning announcements over the public address system. They are responsible for sharing school news with the entire school community.
- Parent workshops take place at the beginning of the year to give an overview of Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, The School Leadership Team provides training for parents to learn more about the Common Core Learning Standards. However, most parents were unable to articulate expectations of the CCLS for students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula strategically integrate instructional shifts across grades and subject areas. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are coherently emphasized across the school's curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

All students have access to rigorous curricula and academic tasks that promote higher order thinking as well as college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project to create units of study. Embedded within the curricula is evidence of several instructional strategies such as anchor charts, scaffolded tools, teacher toolkits, student toolkits, and projects. All units of study also include questioning, writing, vocabulary, and finding text evidence to support a claim. During student interviews, several students mentioned research projects they completed such as the American Revolution. Several students said they rely on items from the student toolkit such as an Essay Bookmark which helps students develop their writing. Other students stated they complete "hard projects" and "big essays".
- A review of teacher lesson plans and curricula across all grades indicate refinements to ensure students are targeted for supports or enrichment based on the need for bilingual or monolingual support in classes. Students are also grouped based on assessment data. During an interview with a student, it was stated, "We get different assignments based on our levels." Another student stated, "If the work is too easy, the teacher changes our group to challenge us."
- Rigorous tasks that promoted higher order thinking across grades and subject areas included examples of students using technology and reading complex texts to synthesize, analyze, summarize, compare/contrast, infer, and interpret information from many sources. Students also have choice in selecting books for independent reading with the purpose of gaining knowledge and information.
- The teacher team was observed engaging in a *Looking at Student Work Protocol* to determine the rationale for low numbers of student mastery on an assessment of fractions. The team realized although students could identify the operation for solving fractional problems, several students could not identify common denominators. The team agreed to reteach the lesson using scaffolds which would be added to the student toolkit.
- The schools curricula provides multiple entry points for all students through partnerships and culminating activities with the New York Historical Society, New York City Museum, Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, and many other organizations. One student stated, "They do different things with us so we can learn, like going on trips." One parent stated, "The school has opportunities for students to learn like a private school."

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the schools curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact

There is actionable and meaningful feedback to teachers and students regarding student achievement so that teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout each classroom, student friendly rubrics are posted alongside student work displayed on the bulletin board. Feedback on student work articulates what students have done well and next steps for improvement. Students also have opportunities to make revisions to their work once they receive feedback. One student stated during interviews, "Success criteria are used to see what we have to do. Then, the teacher gives us feedback to know how we are doing."
- During teacher interviews, one teacher said, "Lesson plans and classroom visits indicate formative assessment and ongoing assessment practices are strategically embedded in daily lessons via questioning, on-demand writing, pre/post assessments, running records, Stop & Jots, Problem of the Day, and student self/peer assessments are provided for immediate feedback on student mastery of content and skills related to learning goals." Another teacher stated, "We use exit tickets to let us know if we need to try it again or use a different approach."
- All teachers and students track, monitor and analyze progress. One teacher at the teacher team meeting described how teachers from the Academic Intervention Services team analyze assessment data regularly, and then follows up with teachers and students, providing additional support for any student whose data shows that he or she is not yet meeting academic targets. This was evidenced through observing the intervention period when a physical education teacher provided support to students who were struggling in ELA.
- During a math lesson, the teacher told students to complete a task. As students were working, the teacher walked around observing student work and realized many were struggling. The teacher called the students back to the carpet and taught the students another strategy that would be easier for them to understand the concept. Then, the teacher allowed students to work in pairs instead of independently. More students were able to complete the task as a result of reteaching.

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

The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based work. Teacher teams analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work.

Impact

Professional collaborations have strengthened teacher instructional capacity which results in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers at the team meetings stated that they provide ongoing feedback in school level decision-making due to the principal’s commitment to ensuring all staff members have a voice in decisions which affect learning throughout the school. For example, teachers reported that they are empowered to set the agenda for the weekly team meetings, with minimal input from administrators. They “check-in” with administrators to provide updates. The teachers recommend instructional resources. For example one teacher stated, “We wanted more time in the morning for close reading with students. We asked the principal if we could extend the time. Ms. Brown allowed us to make adjustments to our schedule.”
- Teacher teams meet horizontally and vertically to develop school-wide instructional practices and improve student achievement. They use a three step protocol based on the level of inquiry, Step 1 – Looking for Patterns in Student Work (Gap Analysis), Step 2 – I-Map (lesson planning to address the gap), Step 3 – Consultancy for Examining Student Work (observing and providing feedback) to guide discussions. There is a recorder who tracks what was discussed and next steps. This process was observed during the teacher team meeting in which the group examined a third grade task in which 20% of students averaged proficiency on standard 4.M.C.5. The teacher team discovered many students could not identify a straight angle.
- Teacher teams analyze student work and data to find trends in performance. Teachers use this information to modify instruction and student tasks. One teacher stated, “We try to think of misconceptions within the task so that we can address student needs before a task is given. Everything is based on data.” Another teacher stated, “Data tells us the type of lesson we need to plan.”