



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

George H. Lindsay

Elementary School K250

**108 Montrose Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Nora Barnes

Date of review: January 12, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

The School Context

George H. Lindsay is an elementary school with 722 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 11% Black, 74% Hispanic, 2% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 14% 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 94.4%.

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 | Developing |
| 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 | Developing |
| 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 | Proficient |
| 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: | Proficient |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to teachers and align them with elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in professional development and other ways of communication. Workshops and student achievement updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations create commitment and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, thus providing a clear vision for the students' academic success via improved teaching practices.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's professional development plan, with its mission statement and professional standards for quality teaching, along with monthly calendars for teacher collaborations and workshops, support all teachers in achieving high instructional expectations embedded in the on-going classroom observation process and feedback to teachers.
- The principal regularly publishes weekly notes to the staff to reinforce successful teaching strategies and to communicate high expectations for teacher collaborations and inquiry. These notes also include next steps in furthering the instructional agenda for the school, such as the expectation to plan for close reading and assessments.
- Parent workshops provide information about the Common Core Learning Standards. Agendas from meetings and parent curriculum booklets list goals for reading and writing and other content areas. They also help families to understand the expectations of units of study and list helpful strategies to support learning. A grade 3 parent brochure, for example, guides parents in how to help their children when they do not understand a vocabulary word. Another grade level guide lists helpful web-based programs for the parents to use at home.
- Parents shared that teachers and school leaders frequently offer guidance and support and regularly communicate with them via conference calls, monthly newsletters and by email. They also said that they have an opportunity to visit classrooms during monthly Fabulous Friday open door days.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers are beginning to differentiate instruction and group students flexibly. The use of multiple entry points to support student thinking and participation are inconsistent and uneven across the school.

Impact

The inconsistent provision of multiple entry points offers limited opportunities for all learners to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in work products and classroom participation.

Supporting Evidence

- During a math lesson in an integrated co-teaching class, students discussed tasks and explained different strategies of how they solved word problems in reciprocal teaching groups. Teachers provided differentiated tasks for identified students. Students had their roles defined. An identifier, for example, asked questions such as “What numbers do we have to circle and underline and which words do we have to box?”
- In one class, teachers asked probing questions and gave students opportunities to think or talk about their answers with partners or in groups. In another class, however, students answered a set of the same questions individually in their notebooks.
- Teachers in some classes provide students with different graphic organizers or pictures to make thinking visible. In one class, for example, students responded to a picture featuring three students in motion and they posted their questions or gave their own title like “forces in motion.” In another class, however, all students received the same graphic organizer and a writing task, while in one class, students worked from a practice reading book.
- A review of student portfolios revealed that some English language learners have opportunities to express themselves in their native language when writing personal narratives. In one reading class, students were making predictions about how plants grow, yet two English language learners were working on the computer practicing isolated language skills, limiting them to make connections between the concepts and their own experience during the lesson.

Additional Findings

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|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Developing |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

Findings

The school is in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards. Unit plans and academic tasks are beginning to reflect planning to cognitively engage students in learning.

Impact

Teachers and leaders are beginning to make decisions to integrate instructional shifts and are developing a process of refining curricula, resulting in more engaging and coherent curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- The writing program and units of study have been added this year to enhance the English language arts curriculum. Teachers are beginning to integrate the Teachers' College writing units to provide students with opportunities to read and write informational and literary genres.
- School leaders and teachers are implementing the Math Exemplars across grade levels to supplement the GO Math! program with problem solving, speaking and writing about the understanding of math problems and concepts.
- A review of curriculum artifacts reveals that teachers are developing practices in planning for student access in units and tasks. For example, curriculum maps across subjects feature questions for activating prior knowledge while some plans list the use of graphic organizers or a think-pair-share strategy to engage students.
- Math lesson plans in grade 4 include differentiated tasks to solve problems with a "make a list" strategy. They also include watching a video, reciprocal student groups, and a plan for group oral presentations of solutions to problems.

Findings

The school is developing in their use of common assessments and systems to measure student progress. The results are inconsistently applied to monitor achievement of goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

Feedback to students and purposeful adjustments to curricula are limited, thus hindering student progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across classrooms use chapter and unit tests and are beginning to keep tracking records of student achievement in problem solving aligned with the Math Exemplars program. Similarly, classroom teachers assess students with the Developmental Reading Assessment and use standards-based rubrics to measure student progress in writing and problem solving.
- A review of student work on bulletin boards and in writing portfolios indicates that teachers are beginning to use four-point rubrics to assess information and personal narrative writing and to provide feedback to students. Some comments include specific strengths, such as a choice of a real-life example to support opinion, and state specific next steps like “for the next essay be sure to write a clear thesis statement that tells readers your point of view.” Some teachers, however, write general comments such as “I enjoyed reading your All About Book” or “let’s work on transitional words.”
- Although some classroom teachers tally the results of student achievement on chapter tests and record them on class rosters to indicate assessed skills and standards, this data and information are not consistently used to adjust units of study and curricula. Kindergarten and grade 1 teachers, for example, keep track of individual student performance on math tests and problem solving from the Math Exemplars program and apply the results to group students as evidenced in their lesson plans. Some teachers, however, follow pre-planned curriculum maps and lessons without making adjustments to address the needs of all learners, including English language learners, special education and higher achieving students.
- Grade level teachers use a newly introduced protocol for looking at student work and are beginning to outline implications for instruction. The grade 4 teacher team, for example, analyzed three pieces of student opinion writing and discussed teaching transitional words as the next instructional step to help students attain grade level goals. Despite these efforts, there was little evidence of timely adjustments to instruction for identified groups of students, thus limiting teachers’ ability to consistently address and push for meeting individual student needs. Furthermore, interviews with the students revealed that while some of them write their goals in reading, others expressed confusion about strategies they can use to meet them.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations via teacher teams. Leadership structures give opportunities for teachers to have a voice in key decisions regarding curriculum and teacher practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and better professional collaborations. These collaborations have built capacity to improve instruction for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly to plan curriculum, to share strategies learned in staff development and workshops, and to look at student work using a school protocol for inquiry. Teachers turn-key information from workshops focusing on close reading, student engagement and writing and discuss applicable practices, working towards school goals to improve instruction and build teacher capacity in discussion and questioning.
- The fourth grade teacher team, for example, uses an inquiry protocol to analyze student writing and to identify strengths and gaps. Teachers also discuss instructional strategies and resources for teaching writing to improve their collaborative planning of the next writing unit.
- Meetings with teachers revealed that they contribute to the school’s instructional decisions. For example, some teachers are leading a new initiative in the implementation of reciprocal teaching in math to improve student discussions and flexible grouping. Similarly, some teachers develop tools for student access such as a writing tool kit that they share with others.
- Teachers have opportunities to lead planning in content areas. Teacher leaders, representing each grade level, meet vertically across grades to make decisions about units of study in reading, writing, math, social studies and science and to discuss teacher practices. They also suggest inter class visitations to observe colleagues in other schools for the use of technology in instruction.