Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Ezra Jack Keats International School

K253

601 Oceanview Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11235

Principal: Lisa Speroni

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Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola

The School Context

The Ezra Jack Keats International School P.S. 253 is an elementary school with 866 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 43% Hispanic, 17% White, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 21% 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 93.7%.

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	**Additional Findings**	**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	**Celebration**	**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**	**Well Developed**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, the use of assessments, rubrics, student self-assessments, and ongoing checks for understanding allow for a clear portrait of student mastery and meaningful feedback to students.

Impact
The school's systems to monitor progress through deep analysis of data gathered from various assessments and during classroom instruction allow teachers to consistently refine unit and lesson plans to meet student-learning needs and to provide students with information, thus making them aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Each unit of study begins with a baseline assessment that provides teachers with item skill data that informs initial planning for the unit. Unit and module plans highlight the standards that the assessments demonstrate are areas of need and individual teacher plans incorporate the data findings that highlight individual student needs used to further individualize instruction.

- Teachers use task specific rubrics to evaluate student work. The rubrics are explicit to the learning students demonstrate with a clear progression for each level from beginner, level 1 to expert, level 4. Clear feedback to students includes language from rubrics and detailed strategies to offer students explicit steps to move forward in their learning.

- Ongoing checks for understanding within daily lessons include focus questions, exit slips, teacher observations and conference notes. Teachers collect data and modify instruction either during the course of the period or during follow-up lessons. For example, after assessing students' work at the beginning of a third grade reading lesson, the teacher formed a guided group of students to provide direct support to those students struggling with the main concept of the lesson, while the remainder of the class worked on activities with appropriate entry points, including leveled reading material, and questioning sequences that provide access for their skill level.

- Students referred to how they use rubrics and self-assessments to identify next steps to inform their learning. Across all grades and subgroups reflective learners are acutely aware of their level of work and the next steps necessary to reach and exceed standards. In addition, teachers gain insight to the depth of student understanding of the task, rubric and standard through the lens of student reflection allowing for informed planning toward facilitating individual student progress.

Area of Focus

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

Findings
The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry work systematically analyzing the impact of teacher practice and strengthening leadership roles. Teacher teams also play an integral role in key school decisions and are currently expanding their work, and deepening their study of the needs of individual students.

Impact
The work of teacher teams results in teacher leadership throughout the school, and deep understanding of the instructional practices that impact student learning, and substantial gains for all subgroups of students in mathematics and English language arts. Yet, teams are deepening their focus in using data at a granular level for individual students and aligning instructional strategies that yield outcomes where the majority of individual students within subgroups are achieving the necessary gains to move their overall performance to mastery of standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Vertical and horizontal inquiry teams disaggregate data from multiple sources including Expeditionary Learning module baseline and culminating assessments, Fountas & Pinnell fiction and non-fiction reading levels, Go Math exams and periodic writing assessments, as well as, student work products to understand trends across the school, grades, classes and individual students. Curriculum maps, units of study and lesson plans demonstrate planning aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and highlight the instructional shifts. Planning documents, such as unit plans and Academic Intervention Services (AIS) and Individual Education Plan (IEP), and goal sheets evidence changes made that align to data. For instance the order in which the components of Expeditionary Learning are unfolding this school year is a result of findings of inquiry teams around skill progression within the units and the areas of strength and weakness of students.

- The use of protocols and procedures to analyze data and study student work products across grades allows for a vertical understanding of student learning. Each team articulates key implications and findings for data by answering questions that include, “What is the data telling us about student performance?” and “What are the implications of this data on instruction?” Teams look at outcomes through the lens of pedagogic practice and articulate that information to inform professional development needs.

- Lead teachers from each grade, sit on a central instructional team with the principal and assistant principal to study school-wide and grade data and participate in professional learning to deepen inquiry and instructional practice. The lead teachers turnkey professional development to their grade or inquiry team. Teacher leads act as a conduit sharing information between teachers and supervisors. Key instructional decisions that teams influenced include the choosing of current Common Core aligned programs of Core Knowledge, Expeditionary Learning and Go Math.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
All curricula align to the Common Core Learning Standards and are continually refined using student data to purposefully ensure that all students and student groups have access to cognitively challenging tasks.

Impact
Curricula decisions ensure coherence and promote college and career readiness by strategically integrating the instruction shifts. Analysis of data and student work ensure appropriate access to all learners including highest and lowest achieving students, English language learners and students, so that all learners engage in tasks and deep thinking

Supporting Evidence

- Units of study, require all students to engage in deep reasoning, including multi-step problem solving, argumentative writing and text-based responses, content specific vocabulary and Depth of Knowledge aligned tasks. For example, a grade 4 unit of student on The Native Americans of NY embeds resources that detail the specific instructional shifts they align to, in this case balancing informational and literary text and the staircase of complexity. The unit plan also articulates specific embedded and culminating assessments that include using vocabulary in context and short and extended response questions. The final product requires students to create a historical narrative from the point of view of a Native American using the information gathered throughout the unit.

- Interdisciplinary unit plans pose essential questions that prompt students to use skills from various content areas and demonstrate higher order thinking. English language arts infuse social studies and science. For example, grade 3 students study frogs by reading informational texts and conducting research building their knowledge using complex texts and close reading. Grade 5 students study inventions as they develop their skills in understanding how to use non-fiction text to build information and answer short and extended response questions demonstrating their ability to use information to create an argument on impact of a particular invention.

- Units of study and lesson plans highlight Habits of Mind, including metacognition, striving for accuracy and questioning and posing problems to equip students with using cues, thought and intentional strategies when engaging in their work.

- Planning is refined using data from student work and assessments including conference notes, exit slips, and formative and summative tasks allowing for all students including highest and lowest achieving, English language learners and special education students to have access to the curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging. Teachers develop differentiated planning pages that articulate the different scaffolds, activities and resources to engage groups of students. These include flexible grouping, guided group activities, leveled readings, differentiated tasks and manipulatives resulting in access for all students to the curriculum across subject areas.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
Pedagogy in the vast majority of classrooms demonstrates high quality instructional supports, including questioning and discussion, and extensions into the curricula, as well as student work product that reflects high levels of student thinking and participation by all students.
Impact
Classrooms across all grades evidence instructional practice that uses a variety of teaching strategies to engage all learners in activities that promote higher order thinking in all students including students with disabilities and English language learners resulting in student work that is demonstrative of rigor, student cognition and student ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Lessons in all subject areas utilize a workshop model with explicit modeling, opportunities for group and independent practice and tasks that demonstrate content and skill mastery. For example, in a grade 4 ICT class, teachers divided the class into two groups with differing foci. One group of students focused on identifying key details in a passage while the other group focused on how to use context clues to define unfamiliar words. For both groups, teachers modeled how to reach the goal of the lesson. Students had the opportunity to work in pairs and then independently. The teachers identified students in their groups that were struggling and pulled them for a guided group to reinforce the learning and provide appropriate access to the content.

- Students have access to a variety of supports to facilitate their learning including extension baskets based upon student need that include activities in scaffolds and manipulatives, room labels and vocabulary aids for English language learners, print rich environments with relevant anchor charts, technology, leap pads and a variety of graphic organizers.

- Student work portfolios, classrooms, bulletin boards and notebooks show tasks that provide students with opportunities to engage in cognitively challenging activities that develop critical thinking skills. For example, after studying Native Americans of New York State, students created a historical narrative around the point of view of a Native American man, woman or child. The task engaged students in the way of life of the Native Americans from a social, political and economic point of view in addition to cause and effect and understanding of the writing project. A rubric provides students with clear expectations and process allows for differentiation and scaffolding to support the needs of all learners. Final products demonstrate high level learning for students across the grade.

- Students across the school describe excitement around their schoolwork. Students engage in understanding *Habits of Mind,* where they study metacognition, or as they describe, “thinking about our thinking.” They use protocols to ask themselves what strategies they are using while reading and engaging in problem solving. Students use peer assessments and checklists to self-assess their learning demonstrating ownership over their learning.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
High expectations are systematically communicated to the entire school community including teachers, students and parents via several modes of communications. Professional development, parent workshops and teacher feedback place students on a path of college and career readiness.

Impact
Structures that support high expectations across all constituencies result in a culture of mutual accountability between the school and families and promote an environment where all students have ownership over their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Articulation of high expectations share “bottom lines” that include data driven planning, collaboration and professional practices that aligns to the Danielson Framework for teaching. Professional development focusing on planning data driven instruction and that aligns to individual teacher data, frequent classroom observations followed by effective feedback, peer inter-visitation and inquiry teamwork reinforce school-wide expectations resulting in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations.

- A Parent Academy supports parent engagement” that builds family capacity to participate in their children’s education. Workshops for parents align to school goals and curricula including “Metacognition” where parents are given specific strategies to help students build their skills in visualizing, making connections and asking questions.

- Opportunities for parents to partner with the school include Understanding Student Reading Levels”, “Creating Literacy Routines At Home”, “Parent Meet and Greet with Teachers, “and “Latin Dance.” Weekend activities that include family wellness, Arts and music that give families and students the opportunities to engage in learning together. Parents report that they are “very supported by the school and feel they are partners in their children’s education.”

- Regular communication with parents includes a school website, Class DoJo a computer program that parents can access that tracks student behavior, progress reports, phone calls, emails and report cards, all which provide parents with a clear understanding of expectations and student progress. Parents report that teachers are accessible and work with them and their children to ensure that students are active participants in their learning and know what they need to work on to reach their goals.