Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Dag Hammarskjold

Elementary School K254

1801 Avenue Y
Brooklyn
NY 11235

Principal: Linda Alhonote

Date of review: May 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Julia Bove

The School Context

Dag Hammarskjold is an elementary school with 748 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 9% Hispanic, 56% White, and 33% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 5% 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 94.9%.

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	**Focus**	**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	**Additional Findings**	**Proficient**
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		
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**	**Proficient**
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	**Celebration**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

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

Findings
Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students they share. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact
Analysis of student work results in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers address student needs across subjects. For example, when it was discussed that science teachers would be covering ecosystems, English language arts teachers collaborated on choosing literacy materials based on science content and student reading levels. Furthermore, teachers discussed how they would implement specific teaching practices to address reading goals for groups of students.

- One teacher team analyzed student work and addressed a need in vocabulary instruction, Based on the work of teacher teams, students have increased their ability to apply challenging vocabulary across texts. For example, a student did not know what the term “search dog” meant. Another student acting as reading partner remembered the term from another text and was able to cite the text and provide a definition.

- Teachers expressed that they have a say in decisions. The vertical teacher team chose to plan around asking more “why?” questions. They decided this based on the fact that in class, students often do not answer unless the question is more engaging. These observations were brought to a team meeting and a strategy was agreed upon.

- Another team member stated that last year they used the predetermined words that come with the ReadyGEN program. This year, teachers have input in adjustments to curricula and chose their own vocabulary that has improved writing for students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula, integrating the instructional shifts, and planning and refining tasks based on student work and data.

Impact
There is inconsistency in lessons and units between subjects and grades. As a result, there are missed opportunities to plan for differentiated instruction for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school chose the ReadyGEN curriculum to align their balanced literacy approach with the Common Core Learning Standards. The school is in the process of moving away from using the pre-packaged units as is; however, at this time, a review of units indicated that units inconsistently reflect modifications. The principal stated that the school's effort to modify the ReadyGEN curriculum was a "work in progress."

- An examination of mathematics units revealed a menu of options that teachers can use for scaffolded instruction. These options included using place value charts, base ten blocks, and visual aids. While this menu is in place and teachers do discuss differentiated instruction, these strategies are not yet apparent in a majority of units or lesson plans.

- In one math classroom visited, students were engaged in differentiated activities such as technology integration and the use of math manipulatives. However, neither the lesson plan reviewed nor the written task planned for these strategies. Furthermore, it is unclear what student work products and data were reviewed to plan this lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn, and student tasks are engaging.

Impact
In a majority of classrooms instruction showed evidence of the school's belief that student thinking improves by extending each other's thinking Student work products reflect a high level of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In a math classroom, students were engaged in an activity with real world application: they were planning their senior prom using a budget of $1,000. Students were working in groups and discussing various ways that money could be spent on goods and services. They were evaluating which items were priorities and which other items they would have to do in order to get the items they wanted.

- In another math classroom, students were debating whether or not the shaded area of two polygons was equal. One child concluded that they were unequal because the shaded area was greater part of the whole shape. Another child countered with the comment that if the shaded area was the same size and shape for both figures (which it was), the size of the whole shape did not matter. The first child saw his point.

- In a kindergarten science classroom, students were discussing why seeds germinate in the spring. One student stated that this was because in the spring, there is sun and rain. Another student pointed out that summer also had sun and rain, so that could not be the answer. The group concluded that water, sun, and soil were necessary for seeds to grow regardless of the season.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure student progress toward goals. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact
Common assessments are in place, but the results are inconsistently used to adjust instruction in the classroom. There are missed opportunities for students to peer or self-assess their work and missed opportunities for teachers to tailor instruction to the needs of groups or individual students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers' assessment practice was inconsistent across classrooms. This results in missed opportunities for students to benefit from being given next steps. For example, one display of student work had comments such as, "You need to focus on transition words." By contrast, another display had comments limited to "keep up the good work," or a drawn smile face.

- During the student interview, students stated that they "sometimes" check each other's work. When asked how often he got to grade a classmate's paper, another student stated, "Once in a while." This was supported by inconsistent evidence of peer assessment across classrooms visited.

- Teachers include checks for understanding regularly in their lessons. These checks include benchmark assessments for reading level and notes from guided reading, and running records; however, classroom observations did not consistently show that the assessment information collected was used to inform purposeful student grouping. For example, in a first grade classroom, students were grouped based on where they were sitting. A kindergarten class was sitting in a whole group, while the teacher engaged students in an extended question and answer session.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations.

Impact
School leaders' system of accountability ensures staff awareness for those high expectations. School leaders and staff expectations connect to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School staff uses technology to communicate high expectations. For example, the school participates in a program called *Future Goals*. Launched by a partnership between the National Hockey League and the National Hockey League Players' Association, this is a technology based program to address a major shortage of students pursuing academic and career paths in the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) related fields.

- The school staff communicates high expectation through a monthly newsletter. The newsletter contains messages from administration, staff, and the student council and celebrates accomplishments. For example, the April newsletter celebrated student work being displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art following a unit on architecture and the careers of architects.

- The school hosts a *Spring into Services Week*, in which parents can observe their children one–on–one as they work with various educational providers. This affords parents the opportunity to better understand the specific needs of their children and participate in helping them make progress.