



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Johann DeKalb Elementary School

Elementary School K270

**241 Emerson Place
Brooklyn
NY 11205**

Principal: Sylvia Wallace-Anderson

**Date of review: May 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Lucia Perez-Medina**

The School Context

Johann DeKalb is an elementary school with 153 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 72% Black, 20% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.1%.

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	Developing
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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The School leader consistently communicates high expectations for teaching and learning using the Danielson's Framework for Teaching. School leader and staff are developing expectations that are connected to a path of college and career readiness and are developing systems to provide feedback to families regarding progress.

Impact

Teachers are held accountable for the school's expectations around teaching and learning and systems are beginning to provide feedback to families informing them of student progress towards meeting those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- During the back to school event In September, the school introduced the families to the seven habits taught through the Leader in Me process. Throughout the year in communication to families the school leader has identified habits for the month and suggested activities for families. The seven habits of highly effective people teach responsibilities that are aligned to academic and personal behaviors. This initiative is still in the process of being understood by staff, students and families.
- The principal communicates expectations for teaching and learning via Principal notes for the week, actionable feedback after observations, regular emails to the staff with links and resources that align to the school's expectations. For example, one email detailed a newsletter from Teaching Channel around analyzing student work with portfolios to support portfolio expectations. Another email included a resource link titled Formative Assessment Strategies and Tools. During the teacher interview, teachers expressed that they find these emails helpful to support the school's expectations.
- During the parent meeting, parents expressed that they enjoy the monthly "Pastries with the Principal" events. Every month the Principal invites parents to come to the school to discuss school expectations and provides handouts to support parents' awareness of what's expected of their children. For example, one parent stated "Last month the principal gave us a handout that lists the standards and the number of assessments expected to be given during the second marking period this year". Parents expressed they would like to engage in more learning activities with the children and learn more about the common core standards.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curriculum to support all learners. Classroom discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Lessons do not consistency provide supports for a diversity of learners, particularly students with disabilities, nor challenge all students to their full potential, thus limiting opportunities for students to engage in higher order thinking tasks and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- In the majority of classes, student cognitive engagement with the work was inconsistent. For example, during an English language arts lesson, most students were engaged in completing the graphic organizer but unable to articulate how it connects to the learning objective or the purpose for which they were organizing information. During a reading lesson, students neither annotated the text nor cited from it when responding to the prompt in partner discussions. During a kindergarten science lesson, all students completed the same task of creating a bridge using toothpicks and marshmallows so that the gingerbread man could cross. No student was able to articulate the purpose of the lesson or what they are currently learning in science.
- In most classes visited, students were presented with the same task with no additional supports or extensions available. In some cases, several students quickly completed the assigned task and waited for the rest of the group to complete the task, while others struggled with the task independently. For example, during a group lesson in a fifth grade class, all students were asked to revise a conclusion. Seven students completed the assignment and waited for the rest of the class to complete the assignment, while six students struggled with describing their work to their partner. During a second grade English language arts lesson, the teacher asked all students to respond to the text by writing down an opinion telling whether Johnny Appleseed was an important person and why? Nine students didn't have additional supports available to complete the task independently and patiently waited for the teacher to explain how to complete the steps.
- Students had opportunities to engage in partnership discussions across two out of seven classrooms visited; however, there were uneven levels of student thinking and participation across all classes visited. In one class some students discussed the book with their partners, while other students didn't interact or respond to their partner. In one Integrated Co- Teaching (ICT) class three groups of students completed the same math tasks independently but the teacher provided three students the opportunity to explain their strategy to the class. In most classrooms, discussion opportunities were limited and there was minimal visible evidence like sentence starters, discussion prompts, charts or other scaffolds to support discussions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the common core standards and staff is in the process of building coherence across grades and subject areas. Curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize higher order skills for all students, particularly students with disabilities.

Impact

There is inconsistency in providing demanding curricula across subject areas that promote college and career readiness. These uneven levels of curricula access limit student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Common Core aligned curriculum materials such as Pearson's *Ready Gen* and Go Math for math, New York State scope and sequence in science and social studies. Special education classes are using Wonders as their reading program. The school leader states that general education teachers work with special education teachers to try to align the concepts taught in Wonders to Ready Gen; however, there are no curriculum maps for the Wonders reading program which would support this effort. In addition, teachers were not able to articulate how they are aligning Wonders to Ready Gen to ensure that students with disabilities have the same access to rigorous tasks and the instructional shifts.
- Lesson plans viewed outlined essential questions, learning objectives, vocabulary and learning activities, building coherence across grades and subjects. However 5 out of 6 lesson plans reviewed didn't plan multiple entry points to support all learning needs. For example, the lesson plan for a bridge grade 3-5 class focused on writing about sequencing; however, the task did not describe how the diverse groups would be supported or challenged. In addition, there was no lesson plan available for a science lesson observed.
- Teachers are in the process of aligning the curriculum to the common core learning standards and incorporating the instructional shifts across all subject areas. Curriculum maps are currently available for Literacy and Math. Teachers are still in the process of finalizing science and social studies curriculum maps across grades and curricula refinements to support a variety of learners are in the emerging stages across grades and all subject areas.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is developing the use of common rubrics and grading policies to provide actionable feedback toward goals across grades and subject areas. Teacher assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

The inconsistent use of common assessments and uneven checks for student understanding result in a lack of effective curricular adjustments, thus hindering meeting all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use the Strategic Teaching and Evaluation of Progress (STEP) assessments to monitor students' independent and instructional reading levels in order to plan small group work to address deficits in the grade level reading progressions. A review of conference notes revealed individual conference notes but planning for small group instruction was not noted in all classrooms visited.
- Formative and end of unit tests in mathematics are utilized to plan for additional practice in a skill or strategy; however it is unclear how progress is tracked across science and social studies. In addition, such assessments do not yet consistently yield actionable feedback for students. Student work products in mathematics indicated a grade for the student with no clear next steps for improvement.
- Students shared that some teachers use exit tickets sometimes to assess understanding of learning. During classroom visits, teachers were inconsistent in checking for understanding during and after lessons. Teachers did not take notes as they observed students working in groups and there was little evidence collected to demonstrate ongoing use of formative assessments used by teachers to inform instruction.
- The school uses rubrics to provide feedback on work that was displayed in the school. Some work products also included next steps in the comment section of the rubric to support students with clear next steps for learning while others received only a general comment. There were a few examples on bulletin boards of peer assessment; however this was not consistently seen in the majority of classrooms and student work folders.
- Teachers checked for understanding in two out of seven classrooms visited. For example, during a math lesson, the teacher used pop sticks calling and returned to the student who was unable to respond to assess whether he understood the question; however, in one English language arts class, the teacher asked students to complete the exit ticket towards the end of the lesson, and then transitioned to a new lesson without giving students an opportunity to complete the exit ticket to demonstrate their understanding.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teacher teams analyze student work and assessments and are beginning to deepen their analysis of assessment results. Distributive leadership practices are developing to support leadership capacity-building.

Impact

The work of teacher teams is not yet consistently resulting in improved pedagogical practice and student progress across subject areas. Furthermore, consistent input by teacher leaders into instructional key decisions is not yet an embedded practice across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers reported that teacher teams analyze STEP data and use the results to form reading groups. Although school staff provided results that indicated improvement with some students, there was no evidence that teacher teams consistently conduct a deep analysis of assessments or review item analyses across content areas. Additionally, the teachers were not able to provide evidence of improved student progress for individuals and groups of students in math, science and social studies. A review of teacher team minutes and sign in sheets indicated that teacher teams meet on Tuesdays but meetings are not always devoted to analyzing student work and assessments.
- Teacher teams meet weekly and twice a month on Tuesdays to review student work products and discuss curricula adjustments. Each teacher stated they use the same tool to track STEP data but they each have their own system for collecting and reviewing all other assessment results. Teachers reported that their team meetings have allowed them to share instructional ideas with each other. However, when teachers were asked about how the work of teacher teams improved student outcomes, one teacher stated, “My students are reading better”. The other teachers agreed but none of the teachers were able to reference specific areas of improvement. There was minimal evidence provided that supports how team meetings lead to improved teacher practice aligned to the Danielson Framework and improved student outcomes.
- During the teacher team meeting, teachers didn’t have a structured agenda. One teacher stated “We use a planning sheet and usually create the agenda on the spot every time we meet”. Teachers didn’t analyze student work nor discuss curriculum adjustments; instead they took turns talking about what they each did with the STEP consultant and what they plan to do next with her to help inform adjustments to the ReadyGen curriculum. When asked about structured protocols, teachers could not articulate a protocol to analyze student work. One teacher stated “We each take turns planning meetings and we are empowered to lead meetings”.