

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Curtis Estabrook

Elementary School K272

**101-24 Seaview Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11236**

Principal: Dakota Keyes

**Date of review: May 18, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale**

The School Context

P.S. 272 Curtis Estabrook is an elementary school with 509 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 79% Black, 15% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 89.7%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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	Proficient
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 communicate the school's instructional goals to staff, ensure opportunities for collaboration, professional development, and provide feedback, in order to foster a culture of high expectations for students, families, and all members of the school community.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations contribute to mutual accountability for staff, students, and families, providing students with a clear path towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff play a critical role in decision-making concerning curriculum, instruction, school climate, professional development, and school policies on personnel, discipline, and program design. As part of the community school initiative teachers seamlessly partner and collaborate daily with staff from Oasis, After school All Stars, and Prototype Performance lab, to share information about student performance, including academic progress, attendance behavior supports and social development, improving student academic and social learning across the school. Students benefit and persevere from strong partnerships with teachers, school leaders, and all members of the school community, who consider academic success and performance of learners their central mission.
- Frequent classroom observations, feedback from classroom visits, reviews of lesson plans, and regular staff newsletters, reinforce school-wide professional expectations to all staff. Additionally, feedback from supervisors following classroom visits promotes accountability for the expectations of the Danielson teaching framework. Observation reports and lesson snapshots promote teacher accountability in fostering high levels of student performance. For example, trends of feedback reviewed include having the teachers invite students to ask questions in response to other students' comments to deepen their thinking and increase the amount students are talking.
- Parents on the School Leadership Team (SLT) participate in the decision-making and educational process and share information to all parents during monthly Parent Teacher Association meetings. Furthermore, the Capturing Kids Hearts behavior management/leadership program supports the school's priority of maintaining professional relations between the school staff, parents, and community based organizations, that reinforce common expectations among adults and encourage positive personal behaviors in students. Ninety percent of the staff and a cadre of parents have participated in training sessions for building supportive collaborative relationships resulting in the adoption of effective social-emotional and academic behaviors in the school community. One recent initiative is that the SLT is collaborating with the Community School Team and are currently planning and scheduling a parent/staff retreat to include the parent body in understanding the ideology, language and practices indicative of the school-wide behavioral management (students)/interpersonal engagement (adults) initiative, developed by the Flippen Group titled "*Capturing Kids Hearts*".
- The school has established a collaborative system of evaluation and reflection that involves teachers, students, parents, administration, and partnering community based organizations, including Oasis, Afterschool All Stars, and Prototype Performance Lab, as well as key members of the school community. All take an active and proactive role in the decision-making process and implementation of instructional expectations with the goal of ensuring implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and New York City instructional expectations. For example, all students were invited to a Saturday Academy program for academic intervention or enrichment to encourage high-level discussions and active involvement in their learning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While the school has aligned pedagogical expectations with the Danielson Framework for teaching, and teachers provide some instructional supports, there is inconsistency in the emphasis on higher order thinking skills and the use of instructional scaffolds and multiple entry points that would further promote in-depth analysis, deepen student engagement, and enrich classroom discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers are beginning to implement academic supports to yield meaningful student work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners, including English language learners, (ELLs), and students with disabilities, (SWDs), to engage in high level discussions and create meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

The level of engagement and participation in lessons observed varied across classrooms. Some lessons were teacher-directed with minimal opportunities for students to talk or work in groups, and higher order questioning or multiple entry points in lessons to meet the needs of all students were not evident in several classrooms. For example, during a third grade social studies lesson students were expected to ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a world map; however, the extended whole class lesson did not allow for student-to-student conversation or time to engage in group work. Furthermore, when the students did turn-and-talk the question was not aligned to the essential question of the lesson. Similarly in a fourth grade social studies class although students were seated at table groups according to ability, they were presented with the same task and only some students received additional guidance from the teacher while an independent group of students quickly completed the task with no further direction.

- Levels of differentiation ranged across classes. In some classrooms, teachers scaffolded the mini-lessons or worked with small groups to either support or extend learning, while in others, extended whole class lessons without student conversation or modeling were observed. As the school has been actively working on improving questioning, a few classes observed showed teachers used strong questioning techniques to gradually promote understanding or prompt the students to think critically. For example, in a kindergarten Integrated Collaborative Teaching class visited during a math lesson the students were observed working in differentiated groups to identify and name two-dimensional shapes with a focus on triangles. Both teachers were observed asking higher-level questions including, “How is a circle different from a triangle?”, and in addition “How is a triangle different from a square?” Similarly, during a third grade reading lesson students were working on understanding the differences between city animals and country animals in order to answer questions from the text. Students moved effortlessly from the mini-lesson to groups where they were completing text organizers to recall, justify, examine, and organize their ideas and record their responses.
- In rooms where robust classroom discussion was observed, it was evident that students were deeply engaged in their learning. Two rooms visited included students challenging one another by asking probing questions having to defend their perspectives. For example in a fourth grade social studies class students were working in independent groups to analyze primary source photographs from Ellis Island. Students were observed interpreting different processing stations people went through during the immigration experience at Ellis Island and were developing their own questions. However, in the remaining rooms observed, there were several missed opportunities for student discussion in which teachers fed the answers to students rather than having them explore possibilities with one another. For example, a first grade lesson observed was overly scaffolded resulting in missed opportunities for students to participate in independent group work and collaborative conversations.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, make purposeful decisions to build coherence, and tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence, and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Unit plans and lesson plans promote higher order thinking skills including scaffolds and extensions of task.

Supporting Evidence

- The school community has adopted Ready Gen literacy and GO Math in kindergarten through grade 5 to cognitively engage students and set them on a path towards college and career readiness. Both programs, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, focus on the instructional shifts that include accountable talk and citing text-based evidence to support answers in English language arts, as well as solving multi-step problems in math using a variety of different strategies.
- Grade level teams review tasks across all subjects and ensure consistent alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. A school wide vertical team of teachers meets bi-monthly with the administration to strengthen teacher capacity relative to the curriculum and works on building coherent curricula across all grades. They adjust and modify their lesson plans to ensure the school's instructional foci are addressed including are higher order thinking skills, deeper questioning, and differentiated instruction to accommodate students' diverse learning needs. For example, math lesson plans reviewed indicate that teachers adjust the independent work and learning tasks during small group independent work time with additional problems for practice, opportunities for students to create their own problems, and materials including graph paper, manipulatives, and computer software programs. As a result, the school is building instructional coherence and promoting college and career readiness for all students.
- Curriculum units contain multiple entry points ensuring access for all learners, with a specific focus on ELLs, SWDs and minority males. Lesson plans provide evidence of differentiated planning for varied learning styles. Additionally, teachers engage in instructional practices and strategies organized around annual, unit and daily lesson plans to meet established student goals and promote high levels of student engagement and inquiry for all students. Social studies and science lesson plans embed resources from Ready Gen and Go Math as well as specific content related materials including primary source documents, photographs, and case studies, to integrate Common Core Learning Standards into the content areas.

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

Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured inquiry based collaboration that promotes achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards including the instructional shifts, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. Distributive leadership structures are in place so that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact

The school's professional collaborations foster reflection, enhance the instructional capacity of teachers, and contribute effective instructional strategies that focus on improved student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams, including instructional support staff, meet during common planning times to plan, align, and differentiate curriculum for all students, with an emphasis and focus on interventions for English language learners, students with disabilities and minority males. These teams have developed structures including agendas, minutes, and supplemental materials, to support progress toward goals. The meeting agendas align to the school's instructional focus of higher order thinking skills, deeper questioning, and differentiated instruction, that accommodates all students' diverse learning styles.
- All teachers are part of grade level teams that have spent much of this year working on making adjustments to strengthen the curriculum and develop units that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. They were an integral part of identifying the school's instructional focus on developing strategies to improve discussion and questioning. Teachers on both observed teams emphasized that this year's work has actively helped them to reflect and strengthen their own practice and, in particular, has promoted a level of collaboration that has sparked more inter-visitation and a deeper interest in shared practice and has resulted in documented improvement in their practice as measured by the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- During the kindergarten teacher team meeting, teachers were observed revisiting portfolio assessments for March and April including the rubrics they are currently using to assess student work. Teachers discussed the purpose of portfolio assessments being to focus on what students already know and build from there. Specifically teachers were revising the assessments with an eye towards gaining insight into how much students are growing and learning in their kindergarten program and to adjust the way they teach to better meet their students' needs.
- The school has established a Response to Intervention Inquiry team that meets bi-weekly and focuses on assisting classroom teachers in planning and implementation strategies that are designed to promote success for those students having trouble in the classroom. The growth of all students is evaluated and recommendations are made for initiating, continuing, or revising services, based on student assessment data. The impact of this team's work is that it has supported classroom teachers in identifying the learning needs of students experiencing school difficulties or who are at risk of failure, and to provide students with academic and behavioral supports needed to succeed in school.
- The data specialist provides teachers/teacher teams with school-wide as well as individual student data in areas of English language arts and math. Additionally, professional development and professional conversations are facilitated on interpreting data and utilizing the information to develop curriculum units, which are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards. Emphasis and focus is given to the lowest quartile of students inclusive of the ELLs, SWDs, and minority males.

Findings

Although the school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas, results are inconsistently used to adjust instruction. Across classrooms teachers assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment so teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet all students learning needs.

Impact

While teachers are becoming more conscious of the effective use of assessment, their inconsistent application limits teachers' ability to effectively adjust curricula to meet student needs, and results in uneven levels of awareness by students of their own learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Although the school uses a variety of formative and summative assessment tools to measure student learning including baseline, mid-line, and end-line Performance Series assessments, Fountas and Pinnell Reading benchmarks, unit and chapter assessments, performance tasks, AIMS web, and student work samples that provide teachers with relevant information to determine trends, teachers are not maximizing the plethora of information to determine student needs and make purposeful adjustments to instruction that results in increased student progress. Additionally conversations with staff as well as documents reviewed indicate that this ongoing work is aimed at strengthening teachers' analysis of student progress toward grade and content goals. While some teachers are beginning to make thoughtful adjustments to instruction for target groups of students, it is not yet consistent work across grades and classes hindering adjustments to curricula and instruction that results in missed opportunities of progress for all students.
- While all teachers use rubrics to assess student work, on many examples of student work there was limited feedback. Students reported that they usually receive a rubric with big projects but several students were unable to explain what they did well or how they need to improve using rubric language. A fourth grader explained how the class developed their own rubric for a project, while some students said they might receive a rubric following the completion of a project, thus indicating a wide variety of teachers' understanding of the effective application of a rubric. Furthermore, grading policies vary from teacher to teacher.
- Classroom visits and meetings with teachers indicated that the school uses ongoing assessments to group students and adjust lesson plans as well as provide feedback on student work including next steps. Students say that teachers confer with them and give them strategies on how to improve their work. However, classroom visits also indicated that teachers across the vast majority of classrooms do not always fully utilize checks for understanding to make immediate adjustments in daily lessons. For example in one math class a small group of students were struggling with the task-at-hand yet the teacher continued to teach without offering a different entry point or scaffold to provide students with additional opportunities to work out an explanation or solution. Similarly, in a first grade science class observed, the teacher did not accurately assess that most students understood the task. The teacher dedicated a great deal of lesson time to explanation and introduction before sending students to work independently, thereby minimizing independent work time and opportunities for students to engage in rich, high-level thinking and discussion with peers.