



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 289 George V. Brower

Elementary School K289

**900 St. Marks Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11213**

Principal: Dennis Jeffers

**Date of review: December 11, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

George V. Brower is an elementary school with 437 students from grade P-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 79% Black, 17% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 13% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

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	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	Area of 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	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

As a result, these collaborations promote the achievement of school goals, the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers. Further, teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in grade level teams weekly using a 'looking at student work collaborative analysis protocol' to analyze student work and data. They use the results to make adjustments to curricula and instruction. Several teachers stated and others unanimously agreed that although they have time to meet formally, they meet informally as well, with many affirming that they meet daily and turnkey for those who cannot attend. Teachers use schoolwide goals to guide their work of implementing the instructional shifts. For example, in a teacher team meeting, the facilitator kept the team focused on the protocol, moving from setting the context, to discussing the work, discussing instruction, and discussing assessment. The team analyzed a writing assessment from three levels and determined next steps for instruction and assessment. Teachers stated that they have grown in their own strength as teachers from this sharing of best practices. For example, a teacher stated that since the team's focus on writing this school year, she has seen great development in her students' writing, particularly in word choice and voice, although they still have further to go.
- To create distributed leadership the school leaders developed a structure for teacher leaders. Last year, seven teachers applied for and were accepted into the teacher leadership program from the NYC Department of Education. These seven teachers are the teacher team facilitators. The training gained from the leadership program is evident in their strength as facilitators. As a result, teachers have strong collegiality and mutual respect that promotes sharing of best practices to strengthen instructional capacity as they implement the CCLS.
- Additionally, in their teacher leadership role, they participate in collegial learning walks, peer observation, and weekly discussions regarding student and teacher needs and next steps. These next steps are shared with administration during the instructional cabinet meetings, as they are constituents. They are charged with developing, designing, and delivering professional development to their colleagues, based on the result of the weekly discussions regarding student and teacher needs and next steps. As a result teachers demonstrate their voice in key decisions.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

The Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts inform teaching practices. As a result of inconsistent implementation of multiple entry points, there is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in all student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Schoolwide staff believes that students learn best when they are in small groups and have multiple entry points to access the CCLS curricula. Although lessons demonstrate planning to provide differentiation for students in five of seven classrooms visited, few provided that differentiation and multiple entry points into the curriculum during the time in class. In a third grade English language arts class, students were seated in data-determined groups based on their reading levels, as determined by the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment. Each group had tiered assignments based on their reading levels, at appropriately challenging tasks for all students. In a second grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math lesson, the co-teachers shared the facilitation of student learning, as students sat on the rug. They called a student up to model using the counting cubes as the class chorally counted. Conversely, in a fourth grade ICT class, students sat on the rug as the teachers conducted a close read of a story with a big book. Although students had an opportunity to turn-and-talk to make sense of the voice in the literary text, they were all provided the same worksheet.
- In most classes student discussions reflect uneven levels of discussion and participation. Most communication remained teacher directed and dominated. Teachers directed questions and a student answered, then the teacher asked another student a different question. This ping-pong questioning presented uneven opportunities for student thinking discussion, and participation. For example, in a fifth grade ICT math class, the teachers asked students to solve a multi-step problem with fractions. However, teachers prodded students trying to start a discussion, but it remained teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher, even though some students did use the accountable talk stems. In a fourth grade math class, the teacher called on two students to share their pair work at the board, solving a multi-step problem. The teacher led the students through their solution, posed questions to the whole class and had two students reply, one with an answer and one with a disagreement and question, leaving most disengaged.
- Although students had the opportunity to speak during a turn-and-talk or in small group work across classes, most did not have the opportunity to participate. On one hand, in a fifth grade math class during the engage activity, all students solved a problem using white board slates while working in pairs at a data-determined table of four. During the time the pairs solved the problem students excitedly collaborated. However, in most classes two or three students answered whole group questions and then the teacher moved on.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the CCLS and content standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions to build coherence. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

As a result, the school leaders and faculty promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners has access to the curricula and tasks and is cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and faculty stated that their approach to integrating the instructional shifts and college and career readiness skills is through the process of looking at student work. The school started as a pilot school five years ago, where the teachers collaborated to produce task bundles. Ever since, the staff has increased their own high expectations and integration of CCLS. This is evidenced in a pre-kindergarten class with English Language Learners (ELLs) and special education students, where the lesson plan has students state their opinion on which holiday they would prefer to celebrate and support their answers with evidence.
- Teacher teams meet to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks using student work, as evidenced by five of the seven lesson plans providing access through a variety of leveled groups, tiered activities, and partner shares. For example, in a third grade class, the teacher analyzed student data based on the MOSL and Fountas and Pinnell to determine the need to support students in inferences and citing evidence to support arguments. The teacher crafted a lesson plan on inferences cited in textual evidence to support student proficiency and created data-based groups and tiered tasks. Teacher data walls and reflections on analysis demonstrate revisions to curricula based on student work and achievements. Posted on classroom walls are leveled groups of all students based on student data, such as Fountas and Pinnell, Read 180, and ReadyGen.
- To intentionally build coherence PK-5, the school leaders and faculty determined from their benchmark and historical data that the main area of focus schoolwide is on writing. Teacher teams decided that they needed a writing theory and rubric for all grades that was focused the areas of growth for students' writing so they adopted the six traits plus one.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. The results of common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Schoolwide, student work posted on bulletin boards and in portfolios demonstrated actionable feedback and next steps that are rooted in the rubric, whether it was teacher created or six traits plus one writing rubric. Additionally, in a few classes students peer assessed their classmates' work. For example, in a fourth grade mathematics class students created their own problems and then assessed their classmates' ability to solve the multistep word problems. On a bulletin board in a fifth grade class, student work in a portfolio had a student idea development post-it, where the student self-assessed his own writing, rating it on a scale of one to five, based on the criteria of the rubric.
- In every class there is a living data wall, posting grading policy, students' goals, student data on Fountas and Pinnell, including running records and benchmarks, the class goals, as well as the teacher's plan of action based on this data. Students set and write their own goals that are revisited at benchmarks. Some classes post what students are learning and how "my" students have progressed. Teachers also post student groupings that are data-determined. Teachers use assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction. For example, in a fifth grade class, the teacher analyzed the results of the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessment. As a result, she determined strengths, short-term goals and long-term goals class wide, and then delineated next steps for students requiring intervention, and used conference notes for those students. Since using context clues was an area of growth, a lesson with this focus used the data-determined groups. After a reflection on the lesson, a group of five students received additional support and intervention.
- Data not only lives in the classrooms but also in the data room, where all grade teams post their data, analysis, charts and graphs, yearly goals, short and long-term, and action plans. The data includes adopted curricula assessments, Fountas and Pinnell, state assessments, and CCLS performance tasks, to name a few. Teacher teams hold their inquiry team meetings in this data room, where they analyze student work and data to determine revisions to curricula and pedagogy.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Staff and school leaders consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

School leaders provide training and have a system of accountability for those expectations. Staff and school leaders offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate their high expectations in writing, in bulletins, staff handbook, observations, and formal feedback, and verbally in professional development and oral feedback. Teacher leaders who represent each grade and subject, design, develop, and deliver in-house professional development that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. For example, the professional development calendar lists topics rooted in the Danielson Framework for Teaching focus, for each Monday. Using data to determine the areas of growth for staff high expectations, the topics focus on questioning and discussion techniques, teaching through shared inquiry, and classroom management. Additionally, staff attends network training. For example staff stated that they recently completed a network-provided training on using data to plan instruction. Staff stated that both of these professional development opportunities occur in cycles that coincide with the observations and agreed that they find the sessions highly productive and effective in improving their own craft.
- As a means of accountability, administration observes teachers looking for evidence of implementation of these trainings and provides actionable feedback on those high expectations. The results feed back into the professional development cycle. For example, the data from the first benchmark revealed students' ability to inference as an area of growth. To that end, how to introduce and reinforce inference is a topic on the professional development calendar for November and December.
- The school sends monthly progress reports home as one method of communicating student progress toward goals, which are listed therein. Additionally, parents and teachers spoke about teachers contacting families on a weekly basis, with their children's academic updates both as areas of growth and success. Parents added that the school has an open-door policy to a warm and welcoming learning environment where they agreed that the school is preparing their children for college and career readiness through the CCLS.