



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Abraham Stockton**

**Elementary School K297**

**700 Park Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11206**

**Principal: James Brown**

**Date of review: March 3, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Steven Chernigoff**

## The School Context

Abraham Stockton is an elementary school with 247 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 43% Black, 51% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.1%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families.

### Impact

Consistently high expectations lead to a culture of mutual accountability for staff and progress toward those expectations for students.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders visit classrooms every two or three weeks for formal and informal observations, as well as frequent walk-throughs of classes, to communicate their expectation that teachers perform to the best of their ability every day. Teachers receive substantive feedback on classroom observations, especially around improving Danielson Domain 3B, Questioning and Discussion techniques. They report that even when they receive a rating of Effective or Highly Effective, teachers “get clear next steps and the tools to [accomplish them].” Another teacher said the feedback is “applicable. We get feedback quickly and regularly and try to apply it to our practice. [Administrators] always have suggestions and pointers, even if it was a great lesson.”
- The school has a system of inter-visitations that encourages teachers to visit each other’s classrooms to learn best practices and also to visit other schools in the network and the district. The principal provides release time for teachers to go to other schools. Another strategic practice that the principal implemented was to bring teachers from higher grades to teach lower grades. The goal is that this will prepare students better, since those teachers know the expectations for higher-grade work. The principal wants to show that all grades connect to each other and have the same high expectations for all students.
- The school utilizes the Golden Ticket to communicate with parents regularly, one of many forms of communication between the school and families. Teachers developed the idea of the Golden Ticket, which is a yellow folder that is sent home weekly with all the information of what is going on in class and school for the week, as well as notes for individual students. Parents review the folder and send back notes, questions and signed forms; they look forward to it and discussed how much easier it makes communication between them and the school. The principal also has many forms of communication with parents including a monthly newsletter, monthly “Coffee with the Principal”, and the school website is updated regularly. The school has weekly parent engagement activities and workshops on topics like supporting your child for the Common Core; makes daily phone calls; publicizes Think Central, the GOMath! website, for help at home; and uses ENGRADE, a grade reporting and communication system that parents report that they love to use.
- The school celebrates student work and success through publishing parties and academic achievement celebrations. The Bulldog Bucks school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports system reinforces positive behaviors by letting students know how they should behave and rewarding them for fulfilling it. Each grade made their own banner expressing their values, as decided upon by the students, aligned to the school’s core values of BRAVE (Be respectful, Responsible, Accountable, Vigilant, Engaged).

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

While teaching practices across classrooms reflect alignment to the Common Core instructional shifts to promote high levels of student thinking and participation, active participation by all students varies across classrooms.

### **Impact**

Teaching practices aligned to the Common Core instructional shifts support students to engage in high level discussions and to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teaching practices incorporate the Common Core and Danielson-aligned strategies of purposeful groupings, students engaging in meaningful discussions and critiquing each other based on evidence from the text. In a 4<sup>th</sup> grade integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, students had to infer what their next unit of study would be from several “mystery documents” related to when different groups of immigrants came to the United States. Students discussed in groups their ideas and then had to agree or disagree with their group mates and explain why. In a 5<sup>th</sup> grade math class, students discussed in groups what their estimate of  $1/12 + 7/8$  is and why. Students asked each other to justify their answers and explain their estimates. However, groups in some classes were less productive than in others, limiting students’ opportunities for learning.
- In a 4<sup>th</sup> grade math lesson, students were solving problems and discussing their work. The teacher circulated from one group to another and asked high-level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions. He asked one group, “Why did you do that? Is there a model for it? If so then show it to me.” The teacher moved on to another group so the students could discuss their responses with each other. But teacher questioning in other classes were of DOK levels one and two, which did not promote high-level thinking and discussion for all students in those classes.
- In a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade literacy in science lesson students came up with their own questions about frogs in their groups and then read them to each other. However, the students did not discuss their questions with each other or with the rest of the class, limiting opportunities for learning.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, integrate the instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions regarding curricula. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects, and for all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Impact

Curricula and academic tasks build coherence across grades and subjects, and promote college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school made a purposeful decision to change its curricula. In literacy it is using Core Knowledge Language Arts in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and Expeditionary Learning in grades 3-5. The school uses GOMath! in all grades. Teachers incorporate science and social studies into the curriculum with materials and trade books that the school has bought as well as teacher-made materials. During curriculum mapping sessions, teachers supplement the curricula with writing activities and tasks, supplement lesson plans with specific higher-order thinking questions according to Webb's DOK matrix, and additional readings on a variety of levels to support weaker students as well as for enrichment.
- Teachers plan for more discussion and writing in class, with deeper questioning. Every lesson must have DOK Levels 3 and 4 questions planned in order to cognitively engage all students. Teachers create writing topics that require students to provide evidence from the text in order to fulfill the school-wide instructional focus.
- Teachers adjust and modify the curriculum as necessary, especially to provide supports for ELLs, students with disabilities and students who are not reading on grade level. They incorporate graphic organizers, chunking strategies and use of technology such as notepads and laptops. Teachers develop higher-order Depth of Knowledge questions as well as activities in which students have to explain their thinking, agree or disagree with peers, justify and defend their ideas as part of the school-wide goal of improving rigor, and citing evidence from text.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### **Impact**

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement so that teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and in-class assessments such as checklists, red/yellow/green desk flipcharts, thumbs up/down responses and fist of five checks, one-to-one conferencing with students, exit tickets, post-it slips with Stars and Stairs, and self-assessment, to receive actionable feedback about student understanding of concepts. There are rubrics for writing and for oral presentation, as well as for group work and self-assessment. Teachers use curricular rubrics but also create their own, based on the Common Core Learning Standards, when they create their own tasks for a particular a grade level.
- In a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom, a teacher gave feedback to a student's science essay, "You show a basic understanding of the water cycle. You also are great at showing the important uses of water. Can you tell me more? How does the water cycle work?" A 4<sup>th</sup> grade English language arts writing task included a student checklist, substantive feedback from the teacher, including Stars and Stairs, and a self-reflection chart that students had to fill out.
- In another 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, students evaluated their group's understanding of how to use models to divide whole numbers that do not divide evenly. The group leaders then explained to the rest of the class what rating on a fist of five their group gave themselves. One student said, "We struggled. We had totally different answers but we worked it out and then we all understood [the right answer]." Another group leader said, "We got 5 because we always encourage each other and [we] got the right answers." In a third grade math class, the students filled out exit slips at the end of the period, in which they explained what strategies they used to solve the problems, and then utilized the red light strategy to self-assess by writing, "I want to \_\_\_\_\_. I need to \_\_\_\_\_."

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

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

**Impact**

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the shifts of the Common Core Learning Standards. Leadership structures allow teachers a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Grade teams meet every Monday afternoon for professional development and Tuesday afternoon for inquiry work during the after-school teacher time. They also meet once a week for common planning during the school day. During inquiry work all teams use the protocol for looking at student work, surfacing the gaps. Teams analyze student work to see if students accomplished the task or need additional help, which they then use to adjust curriculum and lessons. Teams follow up on these practices from week to week to see where students made improvements and where more work is needed.
- Teachers use inquiry time to work toward achieving the school-wide goal of improving students' use of evidence in writing. To date, data from curricular unit assessments indicates that students are improving in this area. Teachers are focused on incorporating the instructional shifts by reading more content-rich non-fiction and informational texts, teaching academic vocabulary and making sure students cite evidence from the text. In math, teachers help students solve real-world problems, model their thinking, construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- Teachers develop their leadership ability by rotating roles on the inquiry teams so everyone gets a chance to be the facilitator. The teacher who takes notes one week chairs the next week's meeting. This involves creating the agenda, selecting student work to look at, reviewing the previous week's work and following up to see what improvement teachers and students have made. Teacher teams also helped select the new literacy and math curricula by attending meetings and consulting with school leaders. Teachers indicate that school leaders "constantly ask for feedback from us and value our opinions since we're the ones with the kids." When teachers wanted to change the math curriculum to the current one, a teacher said that they went to the principal. "He said do the research, do a proposal, show me that it is Common Core-aligned...and he's a math person! He wanted us to prove [why we should switch] and we did."