



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Performing Arts School

Elementary School K315

**2310 Glenwood Road
Brooklyn
NY 11210**

Principal: Judith Ranft

**Date of review: February 10, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Tracey L. Collins**

The School Context

PS 315 is an elementary school with 762 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 67% Black, 21% Hispanic, 3% White, 7% Asian and 2% other students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

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	Focus	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	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 is engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations towards school goals and offer opportunities for teachers' professional growth and input on instructional decisions.

Impact

School-wide examination of student work and reflection on classroom pedagogy builds instructional capacity, resulting in improved teacher practice and fostering leadership that leads to structures affecting student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level inquiry teams include teachers who work with students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs). Cohorts of teachers meet weekly to discuss student work and plan collaboratively during teacher inquiry time on Tuesdays. Minutes are kept and regularly reviewed to support the ongoing inquiry work. During team meetings, teachers share best practices, discuss trends across grades and decide the best way to address learning gaps. For example, kindergarten teachers noticed children were having trouble with writing letters and sounds. Teachers decided to supplement ReadyGEN by increasing daily phonics instruction through the use of the Award Reading program, which provides interactive shared reading stories and word work through the use of the SMARTboards. Teachers report that practice of collaboration helps them plan for differentiation in their classes.
- During a grade 2 team meeting, teachers were collaborating on ways to alter the current resources in their ReadyGEN unit by using a *Chair for My Mother* by Vera Williams versus *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday* by Judith Viorst. In addition, the teachers were sharing different strategies on main idea such as combining details and having students write the main idea or including an unimportant detail. The teachers agreed to try the strategy before making adaptations and agreed to observe one another while implementing it.
- Grade level teachers facilitate vertical planning and team meetings. Teachers set the agenda and develop the inquiry protocol. During weekly team meetings, teachers use this protocol to discuss student work and review data. Teachers make decisions to modify curriculum maps, revise lessons and identify next steps. In addition, the Professional Development team develops the professional learning plan with the administration to support teachers on the school goals. Additionally, teachers participate in the instructional cabinet, which meets twice a month.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies provide multiple entry points consistently connected to the curricula, yet the level of thinking for all learners in appropriately challenging tasks and extensions varies across some classrooms.

Impact

Opportunities for extended learning and demonstration of the highest levels of student ownership in work products vary in the strategic application of entry points.

Supporting Evidence

- During reading instruction in a second grade Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) class, utilizing the text, *Alexander Who Used To Be Rich On Sunday*, the teachers asked open ended questions such as “Do you agree and why? Can you add on?” Students were asked to turn and talk as they described the main event and provided responses such as, “The only way to save his money is to buy a piggy bank and save his money”, to support their opinions. Using a think-pair-share strategy and accountable-talk stems, various students explained why they agreed or disagreed and discussed what Alexander could have done differently.
- Fifth grade teachers developed an accountable-talk discussion routine, which incorporates a mini-lesson, close reading, and open ended questions. Student discussion leaders facilitate partner and whole group discussion, which requires students to cite specific evidence to support their answers, while teachers listen in and only join the discussion as needed. Teachers across grade levels use this discussion routine to help promote accountable-talk amongst students. For example, in a fourth grade class, students read, and discussed an argumentative text entitled, *Yes, Public Curfews are Fair*. Along with the discussion routine, students also used two additional strategies to help frame their arguments: *Access and Four Corners*, and *During Four Corners*. Students showed their position (strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree or disagree) by standing in a particular section of the classroom. The *Access* strategy reminded students to: A- Answer the question, C- Cite using three pieces of evidence, E – Example, E – Explain, S – Sum Up. In addition, students were also able to go online and post their position. However, this level of student ownership and independence in discussion while evident across classrooms was not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.
- To support student at risk subgroups, teacher practices observed include guided reading using pictures from texts and strategy groups. In addition, the use of manipulatives such as cubes in math, help students demonstrate concrete representations of division concepts. However, the use of high quality extensions to challenge high achievers was not evident in the vast majority of classrooms.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school utilizes curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrates instructional shifts and makes refinements so that all learners have access.

Impact

Planning for engagement and instructional coherence across the curricula using student data is consistent across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses ReadyGEN for English Language Arts (ELA). ReadyGEN also integrates science and social studies through non-fiction text. The administration indicated that the teachers use GO Math!. Both curricula align with the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. School leaders indicate that teachers have developed curriculum maps from these programs which are used for daily lesson planning.
- A Literacy Handbook is used to support teachers in refining the ReadyGEN curriculum. Components of the handbook include goal setting, independent reading, guided reading, accountable-talk and assessments. Teachers have been trained on Universal Design for Learning and integrate modifications in tasks and lessons such as front-loading vocabulary, video clips, graphic organizers, and pictures to offer different ways students can access the curricula. In addition, teachers use formative assessment data to plan for modified guided reading.
- Grade level teams make adjustments to the existing ReadyGEN and GO Math! units to incorporate the arts. The art teacher planned lessons on dance patterns to align with math lessons on this concept. In addition, the art teacher planned lessons on drawing trees and leaves to support students in understanding colors. The music teacher planned lessons to align with math geometric concepts. Teachers meet during common planning to discuss best practices to include in their daily lesson planning. A review of units indicates teachers plan for the use of manipulatives in applicable lessons to support hands on learning and student academic needs.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The use of common assessments, ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment are used to monitor student progress towards goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

The use of common assessments leads effective adjustments in curricula and instruction to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses curriculum aligned assessments, including Teachers College Reading and Writing Project benchmark assessments, running records, ReadyGEN and GO Math! performance tasks and portfolios, to collect baseline data, set goals and measure student progress. School-wide staff analyzes data to identify strengths, weaknesses and next steps to determine student progress. Teachers report that they use benchmarks to monitor progress, develop individual goals for students, and make programmatic changes based on interim assessment results.
- Teachers check for understanding during lessons through the use of response cards, a five finger check and a thumbs-up/thumbs-down approach. Teachers report that adjustments are made to lessons based on student responses to help meet learning objectives. One type of adjustment provided is peer support through the use of math and writing masters. In addition, students reported that classroom assessment practices include the use of peer reviews where students provide each other feedback using post its to improve the quality of writing.
- Teacher teams collaboratively examine the results of pre and post formative and summative assessments along with writing samples in order to adjust instruction and meet the needs of all students. Student subgroups and grade level data is disaggregated by the data specialist to help support specific cohorts of students. Reading partners are assigned to at risk students to provide one-to-one support.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leadership utilizes a variety of sources to communicate expectations to school staff and ensure that ongoing feedback to parents on student progress is consistent.

Impact

The school’s effective communication and accountability structures result in the staff understanding their role in incorporating these expectations and support for families in understanding their child’s progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Expectations are communicated through daily morning announcements placed in mailboxes, a staff handbook, a literacy handbook, weekly emails and memoranda on topics such as student feedback, classroom environment and virtue of the month. Professional development is provided to offer training and communicate the instructional focus and school goals to teachers.
- Tuesday afternoons are designated for parent engagement. During this time, teachers facilitate a range of parent outreach such as individual meetings to discuss student progress, entering student performance information into Engrade and creating grade level parent newsletters. In addition, parents indicated that teachers are readily available in various ways through phone calls, text messages, and notes.
- The principal and assistant principal regularly conduct formal and informal observations. During debrief sessions, the administration communicates their expectations on areas such as goal-setting, practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching such as questioning and discussion, as well as student engagement, and provides ongoing feedback. Teachers report that the feedback is actionable and effective. The use of the resource board to assist them with finding resources from professional development sessions is helpful.