



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**William Penn School**

**Elementary School K321**

**180 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11215**

**Principal: Elizabeth Phillips**

**Date of review: February 10, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

## The School Context

William Penn is an elementary school with 1,464 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 9% Hispanic, 77% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.0%.

## 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>Well Developed</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Focus</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Additional Findings</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>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the belief that students learn best when they have collaborative learning experiences that involve high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership.

### Impact

Strong, common-held beliefs on the value of collaborative learning continually guide school and team level discussions so that lessons across the school generate high levels of student participation and thinking in the production of quality work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- In English language arts classes, students are involved in independent reading projects. They select books they want to read, decide what information they want to share with peers, and determine the presentation format they will use. For example, in a second grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom, one student was reading a non-fiction series of books entitled, *Who Would Win?* that compares and contrasts two animals. The student's assignment was to write his own *Who Would Win?* book incorporating the non-fiction features he had studied as well as research information that he gathered about his chosen animals. Other students in the class were in the process of creating field guides, graphic novels, comic strips, and posters among other items to demonstrate their learning and inform others.
- The school believes in making cross curricula connections. This is most evident among social studies, English language arts, and visual arts. Third grade students studying China participate in multiple research and writing projects and art projects including creation of masks, panda snow globes, and learning to write calligraphy. Dance and instructional field trips further support culture study. Students then select aspects of Chinese culture they want to explore further and create final group projects. Art and literacy projects are displayed in classrooms and students across classes participate in museum walks. A number of others unit studies including Colonial America, New York City, and the Civil War evidence the same collaborative project based elements.
- In a 4<sup>th</sup> grade math workshop, the teacher provided student pairs a choice in selecting a reteach, practice, or challenge level problem to explore together. One task entitled "Conjecture About Fractions" asked students to create viable arguments to show why statements written about fractions were true. A second task, asked students to compare fractions and justify their claims by creating visual fraction models. As students worked in pairs, the teacher pulled small groups for guided instruction based on formative assessment data.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School-wide, teachers use common assessments aligned to the curricula and ongoing checks for understanding that include students' consistent engagement in peer and self-reflection opportunities. The school realizes that evaluating student success within group projects and determining causal factors in uneven math growth are areas in need of additional focus.

### Impact

Formative and summative assessment data provides teachers with a clear portrait of student mastery, and new methods to assess math growth are recognized as a need. Students receive and provide to their peers meaningful feedback and can articulate their next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- In reading, Fountas and Pinnell running record assessments used school-wide align to the curriculum and provide information about students' reading level as well as strengths and weaknesses in comprehension, fluency, and decoding. Teachers selected this assessment system because they judged that it provided a more realistic assessment of students' reading and comprehension skills in both fiction and non-fiction text. Additionally, teachers use Confer or other selected apps to make better use of conference notes to group and track student progress on formative pieces over time to inform targeted student groups and reteach opportunities.
- Math teacher leaders have developed grade-wide end of year assessments whose results are evaluated and then passed on to the next year's teacher as a starting point for math instruction. In math, as teacher teams have modified curriculum to strengthen alignment to the Common Core; they have modified assessments as well. Recently, for example, 3rd grade teachers looked at their multiplication and division unit and developed a revised assessment based on current goals for their students. Additionally, teams decided to administer "pre-assessments" more frequently to make better determinations regarding specific instructional needs and avenues for differentiation. Part of the work with Metamorphosis, a consultant partner, involves having teachers administer an assessment and then, as a group, analyze student work to determine what students understand in terms of process, content, and organization. Teachers understand the need to be teaching for transference, and so increasingly, one of the goals of assessments is to determine how much this is happening. Teachers have increased opportunities for students to demonstrate the application of skills and strategies to real world problems and explain their thinking, as opposed to simply checking their answers. However, despite the fact that high percentages of students are proficient in math, the school recognizes the need to look more closely at sub-groups in exploring why growth percentile rates in math have not been consistent.
- Students are provided with rubrics consistently at the beginning of each project to establish clear expectations. Students receive the most feedback on their drafts and early revisions, and have frequent opportunities to self-reflect and participate in peer conferences. Teachers are consistent in conferring with students and pulling small groups of students aside to support or extend their learning. In one class, a teacher pulled four students who were working on writing historical fiction to discuss how they have seen symbolism used in the historical fiction they read and how they may include this information in their work.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty align curricula to Common Core Standards and strategically integrate instructional shifts emphasizing academic tasks that require rigorous higher order thinking.

### Impact

All learners are engaged in project-based learning experiences within a coherent curriculum that promotes acquisition of college and career skills and provides them opportunities to interact with a variety of content and demonstrate their understanding in a variety of ways.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has created a balanced Common Core aligned mathematics curriculum, focusing on skills, thinking, and application. Through the work of teacher teams the school identified Mathematical Standards of Practice as an expectation for student learning in mathematics. The school utilizes these Standards of Practice along with their partner Metamorphosis' support to strengthen their units grounded in TERC investigations. A major shift was initiated this year to begin September instruction with a school-wide unit on Habits of Mind. Teacher teams continually revise the curriculum and are focusing this year on a cross-grade approach harnessing a deepened understanding of the expectations within grade bands to create a continuum by which to provide more effective differentiation.
- The school has a 30 year relationship with the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project which guides the work in literacy school-wide. Teacher teams work with college consultants to continually strengthen units of study. After reviewing units for their alignment to Common Core Learning Standards, teachers selected to focus on increasing and strengthening persuasive writing opportunities. Teachers have enriched those units of study, adding a debate component so that students have opportunities to give oral presentations to demonstrate their understanding. Also while all students had to create a final written piece for this unit, throughout they were able to express understanding in multiple ways, such as creating video clips or producing television commercials. Additionally, the school has adopted Foundations to support foundational reading skills.
- The school works with the Teachers College Inclusive Classroom Project, which supports teachers in utilizing the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) model in curricula planning. The social studies curriculum reflects how the Common Core, the Danielson Framework and UDL are incorporated into created units of study. First graders study Prospect Park. They interview and write up their notes with park workers, learn about mapping, and participate in a park clean up, culminating their study with projects such as making a 3-D park map park or designing a playground. Fifth graders are immersed in a three month-long Slavery/Abolition/Civil War unit where they read primary and secondary sources, watch video clips, write essays, conduct research, and attend local and out-of-state field trips. They participate in historical fiction book clubs and hold debates arguing questions such as, "What were the most important reasons for the Union victory?" Throughout, while teachers have goals for student learning outcomes, students are given choices in the topics they want to study within a unit, as well as the forum for sharing their learning including creation of posters and videos, as well as in traditional writing assignments. All students have experiences of working independently, in pairs, and in small groups.

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

The school has established a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to staff and families toward students achieving college and career readiness.

### Impact

Structures for communication and collaboration result in mutual accountability for student achievement and school improvement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have unpacked the Danielson Framework for Teaching and engage in extensive professional development focused on supporting all learners in accessing and engaging with rigorous content. Some of the more recent professional development has teachers working with the Teacher’s College Inclusive Classroom Project and Metamorphosis. Inclusion classroom teachers and math leaders are training peers in effective practices, as well as determining benchmarks for implementation. Administration supports this work, participating in team meetings, working with teachers to examine the impact of practice on student performance and conducting observation cycles with actionable feedback and professional support opportunities.
- Parents serve as “Learning Friends,” meeting weekly with an individual student. Close to 1,000 parents join teachers on the first Friday of every month for Family Fridays where they participate in some aspect of the curriculum with their children. For example, parents created dragon masks with their children as part of a social studies unit on China. At “Parent Math Night,” parents learned about how teachers teach math and how they as parents can have conversations with their children about mathematical thinking using mathematical language. The Parent Math Committee started a multiplication club to help 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders who need support learning their times tables. Parent volunteers work with small groups of children in this club every Wednesday morning. Parents also run enrichment club cycles with teachers as an after-school cycle. Additionally, parent volunteers support students in the computer lab and at kindergarten choice time.
- The school begins the year with a curriculum night where parents receive information about the expectations for the current school-year. Teachers communicate frequently through newsletters, class websites, emails, and meetings. Their newsletters and websites give details to parents about the curriculum and expectations. Progress reports and report cards, along with regular one-to-one conferences on Tuesdays ensure parents are informed of student progress in meeting academic and personal goals. Parents are also supported in acquiring strategies and accessing resources in order to support students at home.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

All staff are engaged in professional learning collaborations that are frequently teacher led and focused on continually growing practices to meet the needs of a diverse population of learners.

### Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in strengthened instructional practice and coherence and led to improvement in the achievement of all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has a vertical team of math leaders across grades K-5 who currently work with Metamorphosis to deepen their work in mathematics instruction. On each grade level, teachers reviewed math tasks and recognized that students were successful with the computation in math problems but struggled with making sense of complex world problems. Across the grades, teachers incorporated more opportunities for students to sort through information and create visual models and plans before selecting a problem-solving strategy. As part of their inquiry-based collaborative practice with their consultant partner teachers decided to administer the same math task to both grades 4 and 5 and then reviewed results to examine differences in ways students approached the problem. Across the grades it was evident that students could solve the problems and show their work but could not provide an answer to justify how they knew they were correct. As a result, teachers are implementing more conferring in math and opportunities for students to explain their thinking, school-wide.
- Just as the school believes that children need to have ownership over much of their own learning, they feel the same way about staff members taking ownership for their learning. The school has a professional development committee responsible for planning professional development for the year. One of the top priorities was to make sure that there were several Design Your Own (DYO) professional development cycles, where teachers could decide who they wanted to work with and what they wanted to focus on. Some of the DYO that teachers worked on in the Fall/Winter included: "Reviewing/Evaluating Student Writing to Plan Small Group Instruction Including the Use of Student Checklists and Rubrics" (1<sup>st</sup> grade); "Developing 'Just Right' Math Games and a System for Using Them" (1<sup>st</sup> grade); "Using the UDL Structure and Analysis of Student Work to Differentiate Curriculum" (3<sup>rd</sup> grade); "Conferring During Writers Workshop-Building on the Professional Development with Carl Anderson" (4<sup>th</sup> grade); and "Reviewing Student Writing to Develop Strategy Lessons for Small Groups and Teaching Points for Conferring" (Kindergarten). In addition to the DYO cycles, there are several other professional development cycles, some grade-based and some cross-grade. Teachers facilitate these meetings and share information on Google drive and at collaborative sessions so that effective practices can be utilized school-wide.
- Teachers work in cycles with literacy staff developers and turnkey all information to their peers. Teacher teamwork in this area has strengthened literacy practices, as has the implementation of Foundations in grades K-2. The use of Fountas and Pinnell assessments in all grades allows teachers to more effectively target instruction to meet the needs of students at all levels. Students consistently exceed benchmarks for early grade progress and exceeded their target for closing the achievement gap in English language arts as reported in the 2013-2014 School Quality Guide.