



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Surfside School

Elementary School K329

**2929 West 30 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11224**

Principal: Salema Marbury

**Date of review: March 25, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Neal Opromalla**

The School Context

The Surfside School is an elementary school with 445 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 60% Black, 27% Hispanic, 7% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.7%.

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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff and provide training aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families.

Impact

As a result of the diligence of school leaders, a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations is well embedded at this school. In addition, families have clear expectations around providing support to their children towards achieving those goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff centered on the Danielson Framework during professional learning sessions, one-on-one conversations and written feedback. Teachers engage in professional study twice monthly around topics and professional book studies aligned to the school's overall improvement goals including: *Academic Conversations*, *Choice Words* and reflective planning.
- School leaders and staff systematically communicate a unified set of clear expectations to all students on both the academic as well as the behavioral levels. Students easily articulate school-wide and grade-aligned mantras. These mantras outline behavioral expectations and core values for the entire school. The mantra, EMPOWER, for example, is displayed in every classroom and recited by all students each day. The acronym's significance is as follows: E- strive for excellence; M- make good choices; P- come prepared for the day; O- have outstanding behavior; W-work hard in every way; E- encourage others to do well and R- have respect for myself and others. This results in a cohesive community where the teaching staff is able focus on content as opposed to behavior while students are in classrooms. This practice has resulted in a 66% decline in school occurrences as compared to data from last school year at this time.
- School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations to families through the preparation and distribution of monthly student progress reports. These reports communicate each student's academic as well as college and career readiness skills performance including work habits, organizational skills, and next steps toward improvement, resulting in parents' ability to assist their children with achieving their academic goals. For example, parents articulated that teachers provide specific activities for students to do at home to support the work being done at school. This includes daily reading to improve stamina with conversation around main idea to support comprehension.
- The school's focus on life skills and the implementation of life skills programs provided during the day expose students to the importance of college and career readiness by helping them to develop much needed skills such as: persistence, organization and self-regulation. For example the school has partnerships with the Institute for Understanding Behavior, Partnership with Children, Alvin Ailey Dance and Boys Mentoring through Basketball programs. These partnerships' focus on life skills has resulted in 73% of students in grade 3, for example, achieving their life skills benchmark for college and career readiness.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how all students, including students with disabilities as well as English language learners, learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Throughout the school, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

In most classrooms, teaching strategies including questioning and scaffolds that enable students to engage in challenging work that demonstrates their thinking and participation; however, supports and extensions and high levels of student ownership were not systematically observed in all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- There are some structures and routines which include collaborative protocols for students to have conversations and discussions in small groups based on questions posed by the teacher. In one 5th grade classroom observed, for example, students were organized in four groups and tasked with comparing and contrasting the traits of characters in their text. In a 4th grade classroom observed, students were working in groups to determine the author's purpose by drawing on specific details in a text. Scaffolds to support all learners were present in many but not all classrooms observed and as a result, some learners struggled with the tasks presented.
- Most teachers identify and generate prioritized learning objectives and teach lessons to support those objectives to whole classes and to smaller groups of students. For example, in one classroom, students were asked to analyze how two characters look and feel and to describe their actions. In another class, students were asked to divide to solve word problems using manipulatives.
- Teachers scaffold questions to include the lower-level students and then progress to the higher-level questions. However, in some classes observed, those types of questions were not evident. Therefore, there is limited evidence that teachers are deepening the level of instruction to provide appropriate scaffolds and challenges for all students.
- Individual teachers and teacher teams plan lessons using student data to guide their targeted adjustments. In most classes observed there were students clustered for small group instruction, however, lessons did not consistently reflect multiple entry points for access to the learning opportunities, especially for higher functioning students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has developed engaging, rigorous curricula that align to the Common Core Learning Standards and that have strategically integrated carefully selected instructional shifts, embedding them in a coherent way across all subjects and grades.

Impact

As a result of the demands of the Common Core, school leaders and faculty have strategically refined the current coherent curricula to promote college and career readiness so that all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, are expected to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Through a reflective planning process, lesson plan templates ensure coherence across grades and subjects and entail key elements to make curricula and tasks accessible for all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs. Learning objectives and “I Can” statements link to prior learning to allow students to make connections across lessons and units. Modeling, think aloud strategies, active engagement, independent practice, and assessment of learning to inform next steps or revisions for next day lessons all serve to deepen students’ understanding of curricula tasks.
- Teachers across all grades plan higher level questions to stimulate discussion, so that students are reading higher-level, rigorous text and engaging in more complex thinking. For example, across content areas, lessons include extensions to provide access for ELLs and students with disabilities. These include glossaries, tiered leveled readings, graphic organizers and vocabulary cards. Current data indicates that 54% of all 5th grade students are demonstrating proficiency with determining the main idea of a text and explaining how the main idea is supported by key details.
- The instructional shift of text-based answers to support claims is embedded in units of study, impacting the work through the development of student learning targets, setting clear expectations for students and allowing students to engage in tasks that demonstrate mastery of standards. Periodic assessment data results reveal marked increases in student outcomes across grade levels on key literacy standards inclusive of determining themes and the main idea using details from the text.
- Across grade levels, teachers utilize a standards-aligned benchmarking system in English language arts, science, math and life skills in order to track and measure their students’ progress in achieving mastery of 80% of the standards across each unit of study. As a result of this system, teachers have a significant amount of data that informs planning and provide small group and targeted instruction to strugglers.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teachers at each grade level create and use common assessments, rubrics and tasks, and rigorously analyze the resulting data to identify gaps in learning, targeting prescriptive instructional strategies to address these needs. Teachers use varied checks for understanding and student self-assessment practices on an ongoing basis.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback on student achievement is provided to students and teachers. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps, resulting in all students demonstrating increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes standards mastery recording sheets and DataCation software to align assessments to the curriculum and to focus on targeted standards. The data rendered is analyzed by teachers who then make adjustments to their units and daily plans. On one grade 3 lesson plan, for example, a teacher, through a reflective planning process with colleagues after careful analysis of her students' data, revised her plans to include more specific learning target language in order to engage her students and activate their learning.
- Teachers use data from formative assessments to plan for flexible instructional groups in classrooms and to plan and implement tasks that scaffold learning, thereby making tasks more accessible to students. These checks for understanding include: stop and jot protocols, medial summary questions, student self-assessment checklists and exit slips. In one classroom observed, the teacher used a "thumbs up/down" system for understanding the concepts taught in order to make immediate modifications to her instruction and ensure more effective learning for all students.
- The use of rubrics and checklists afford students the opportunity to receive clear guidance when working in groups or independently on tasks. Students self-assess and conference with peers to make improvements to work products. Teacher feedback is specific and informs students how to improve their work. For example, on one piece of student work, one teacher wrote, "I enjoyed reading your essay on the rainforest. You did an excellent job including many nonfiction text features in your essay. Next, we will work on including more definitions and other examples."

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

Scheduled professional collaborations, including reflective planning sessions and professional learning communities across grades and content areas, allow teams of teachers to share content knowledge and instructional strategies for improving teaching and learning.

Impact

The inclusion of staff in a variety of teams empowers all teachers to assume responsibility for collectively improving teacher practice and student mastery of key Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly, using agendas and protocols that focus attention on meeting the goal of improving student achievement through improved teaching practices. This is accomplished through reflective planning, inquiry and professional learning community work all of which are aligned to the school’s instructional foci. At this school, all teacher team activities are aligned to the teachers’ needs as measured by informal and formal observation feedback and to students’ needs based on the analysis of student work products and assessment data, resulting in a year-long professional development framework designed to increase student engagement and increase teacher effectiveness.
- At team meetings, teachers refine curricula, analyze assessments, and design instructional adjustments. For example, during a 4th grade meeting, teachers analyzed student work generated from a learning target assessment focused on character analysis. This analysis enabled teachers to adjust future lessons within the unit of study; however, strategies to support students who struggled with specific supports were not planned or articulated.
- Teacher team meetings are attended by all teachers, including cluster staff and related service providers. Lead teachers provide support during meetings through data analysis, instructional resources, and next steps to improve student learning outcomes and teacher pedagogy. According to the principal, this has strengthened teacher practice and 25% of all teachers have improved one HEDI level on Danielson Domain 3: Pedagogy from October – March of this school year.