



# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Abe Stark School**

**Elementary School K346**

**1400 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11239**

**Principal: Kevin Caifa**

**Date of review: March 31, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Brenda Perez**

## The School Context

The Abe Stark School is an elementary school with 440 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 65% Black, 25% Hispanic, 6% White and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 20% 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 93.0%.

## 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>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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Proficient</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 Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

The school leader conveys high expectations for teaching and learning and supports pedagogy and student learning by building teacher capacity and student responsibility towards meeting these expectations. In addition, school systems hold school continuants accountable to meeting instructional, academic and socio-emotional responsibilities.

### Impact

School systems such as the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Positive Behavior Intervention System for students, communicate high expectations and hold school continuants accountable to meeting instructional, academic and socio-emotional responsibilities. As a result, all constituents have a common understanding of the expectations and strive for success in meeting school goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations through professional learning opportunities around the Daniel Framework for Teaching and teacher choice. Teachers stated that at the beginning of the year, they were asked to self-reflect on their practice and take a survey to inform the school's professional learning plan. Teachers reported that they have been given a greater voice in selecting teacher professional learning topics that are in line with students' goals.
- The school has implemented "Bucket Fillers", a Positive Behavior Intervention System that has resulted in a safe, inclusive and positive learning environment. Students are recognized for respecting the rights of others and doing good deeds. Each morning students recite the Bucket Pledge after the Pledge of Allegiance. Students earn "Bucket Bucks" that they spend at the school's Bucket store. The school's Student Government Council meets weekly to discuss ways to improve the school and have made recommendations to improve the quality of school food and lunch time behavior resulting in a decrease of incidents in the school. Additionally, students reported that they are happy with their school because they feel that their teachers really care about them. They stated that when the work is challenging; their teachers will help them until they understand the content. One student stated that he felt happy that the teacher believed in him and another said that when he doesn't understand something, "the teacher breaks it down into little pieces" until he understands the work.
- Parents stated that they meet regularly with their children's teachers during parental engagement opportunities on Tuesdays and that the teachers make phone calls about students' progress and send home progress reports regarding their children meeting academic and socio-emotional expectations. They also stated that teachers and the parent coordinator offer parent workshops in the ELA and Math curriculum and Common Core Learning Standards. As a result, families understand what their children need to be successful and express confidence that the school is preparing their children with the college and career readiness skills they need for future success.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies do not consistently reflect the use of multiple entry points for learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Student work products, discussion and participation reflect inconsistent access to supports and extensions.

### Impact

Inconsistent supports to promote high level thinking result in limited opportunities to maximize student learning or give access to the challenging curricula. Discussions, class participation, and efforts to promote thinking result in limited opportunities for increased student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- While teachers engage students in lessons and activities, in many classes observed, teachers utilize the same materials. As a result, students were not challenged sufficiently or given equal opportunities to enhance academic growth or take ownership of learning. For example, in a fourth grade math class, all students worked closely with the teacher on a page in their Go Math workbook. The teacher framed questions that lead student thinking through a single correct answer and while the teacher utilize the strategy of turn and talk to encourage discussion, student participation yield uneven results.
- Across classrooms adequate supports to promote high level thinking to meet the needs of high achieving students, ELLs and students with disabilities were inconsistent. For example, in a fifth grade ELA class, students worked on how readers make sense of informational texts. The teacher posed questions that range from low level to high level to promote student thinking and understanding. Students were provided with opportunities to discuss and share their thinking with classmates and they were assigned different questions based on group levels. Different groups worked on answering questions such as, "How is Mars different from Earth, Explain how has our understanding of Mars has change over time and based on your readings, what questions do you have?". However, in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) second grade class observed, students were learning to count coins. The teacher discussed with students what the coins looked like and the value of the coins. All students were asked to pull coins that the teacher named from their baggies and count the coins together. Though students were provided with place value mats and coins and there was another adult in the room, the teacher worked with the entire group, reflecting a limited range of pedagogical approaches to students' learning needs.
- Paraprofessionals participate in professional learning opportunities to support differentiation of instruction through small group and individualized attention based on students' needs. However, during class visits, most were not observed actively engaged with students or utilizing alternate resources or strategies.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

The school has adopted common assessments in literacy and math and has a system for data collection. The school is working towards developing common assessments and making effective adjustments in social studies and science to the curricula and monitor student progress.

### Impact

Although the school has common assessments in place for literacy and math and common assessments are frequently analyzed to inform instruction, results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction across subjects to meet the needs of all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has a social studies and science specialty teacher that utilizes the New York City Department of Education Scope and Sequence curricula. The school's literacy program also supports the curricula via non-fiction texts provided to students during literacy. However, the school does not have a school-wide system to collect social studies and science data to consistently track student progress.
- The school leader stated that in literacy and math, teachers check for understanding throughout the lesson and information collected is used to guide decision making about future instruction. Conferencing, discussions, exit slips, rubrics, and checklists are venues used to collect data.
- Teachers and students reported that they conference with students and use rubrics and/or checklists in assigned tasks. Bulletin board displays illustrated the use of rubrics along with rubric-based glow and grow comments on students' work products. However, in most classes observed, only in three of the eight classes, did the teacher confer with students at tables and provide feedback to the student and the whole group for clarification or redirection.
- Goals are created using the Common Core Learning Standards, and teachers establish short-term and long-term goals for student learning in literacy and math. Teachers build on the strengths, interests, and needs of all students to establish high expectations for learning. Teachers design instructional activities so that all students participate in the activities and achieve the learning goals. They look at student's progress over time and adjust grouping to meet the needs of all children. A student stated that "when I make a goal and achieve it, I go on and beyond to a higher goal". Students reported that in reading, their teachers have high expectations and push them to go higher.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

The school provides a rigorous curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrates the instructional shifts with resources and programs that prepares all students for college and careers.

### Impact

Students benefit from the Common Core Standards based coherent curricula that offer a range of experiences that support learning, foster critical thinking skills, and promote college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams have developed a reflective rationale template for each unit in the curriculum emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order skills in all grades and classes. The rationale template include questions such as, " why are we teaching this unit, how does this unit fit into the total curriculum, what knowledge and skills does the unit address, how does the content meet the needs of all learners, what changes has the team made in the implementation of the unit and what changes do they recommend to make for next year covering this material". Teachers stated that they use this information to make adjustments to curriculum maps, plan for multiple entry points and trips to support student learning.
- All grades have curriculum maps and common planning time is embedded in the school's schedule to allow teachers to meet weekly to discuss student work and make revisions to the curriculum maps. School leaders are assigned to specific grades and assist the grade teams with planning/revising units that include multiple entry points, and resources. All Ready Gen units contain both a rational page and a Planning for All Learners (PAL) page. The rational indicates the reason for the unit to be studied, expected outcomes and any changes made to the unit. The PAL ensures that all learners are included in the unit plan and teachers keep in mind the needs of various subgroups of students in their classes as well as areas that need additional attention and supports. .
- The school supplements the curriculum with additional programs such as *MyOn* and *Read Well*. The *MyOn* program provides students with access to thousands of enhanced fiction and non-fiction digital books, recommending content by interest and reading level in grades 2-5. *Read Well* is used in kindergarten to second grade as a vehicle to teach phonics and fluency in kindergarten and first grade. Students are frequently assessed and placed in a group of 6-7 students in their level and meet for guided instruction. Each class has three groups that meet for 20 minutes per group while other students are working on differentiated reading activities and strategies.
- The school's science curricula is supplemented by Greenhouse Environmental program and provides opportunities for students across all grades to engage in observation, exploration and learning about environmental themes such as, Hydroponics/Aquaponics, urban gardening, wildlife preservation and the conservation of natural resources.

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

**Findings**

Teacher teams across all grades meet to analyze assessment data related to student achievement, discuss instructional strategies to improve student learning and make adjustments to curricula to improve outcomes.

**Impact**

Professional collaborations strengthen pedagogy practice and contribute to effective instructional practices in the classroom that focus on improving student outcomes.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leader stated that he has implemented a school Instructional Leader Team (ILT) that holds bi-weekly meetings for curriculum planning/revisions. These teachers lead the grade work. For example, the ILT work with the teachers to include planning for all learners in each of their Ready Gen curriculum maps units. Teachers described the materials, visual representation and demonstration to meet the needs of all learners. Additionally, as they focus on ways to improve instruction and practices that may need to replace with more effective, supporting strategies.
- The ILT helps each grade’s teacher teams set student achievement goals; ensures collaborative planning and professional development meetings remain dedicated on the school’s instructional focus. These steps have become the foundation for the instructional improvement work to follow and includes the implementation of a set of School-wide Best Practices, enhanced common planning and professional development meetings, all driven by the instructional focus.
- All teachers participate in grade level teams using collaborative inquiry to hone in on relevant issues and target students for inquiry work and study. For example, kindergarten and first grade teachers reported that the development of phonics and fluency was area for improvement. To address this need, they decided to supplement literacy with Read-Well. They group student and main stream across kindergarten and first grade classes according to their levels. Each teacher has three groups in their class, and meets with each group for 20 minutes while other students work on English language arts (ELA) related activities. Teachers stated that they look at students’ progress and adjust grouping to meet the needs of all the students.
- Teachers reported that they meet weekly with their teams on the grade to discuss and analyze data, and plan lessons to address findings. Teachers make adjustments to curricula according to most recent assessments and re-teach areas of weakness. Teachers stated that they felt supported by administrators and that they meet to discuss and align changes to literacy and mathematics curricula to reflect class and grade needs.