

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**P.S. 371 - Lillian L. Rashkis**

**High School K371**

**355 37 Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11232**

**Principal: Joan Antonelli**

**Dates of review: May 14, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Kathleen Lefevre**

## The School Context

P.S. 371 - Lillian L. Rashkis is a high school with 272 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 56% Black, 28% Hispanic, 8% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 73% special education students. Boys account for 69% of the students enrolled and girls account for 31%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 69.1%.

## School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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>

### School Culture

<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>

### Systems for Improvement

<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

**Quality Indicator:**

**3.4 High Expectations**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through various forms of communication and professional development that emphasizes the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff communicate expectations connected to college and career reading with families to support the academic and behavioral progress of their children.

### Impact

Collaboration between all stakeholders results in shared accountability linked to supporting student achievement in meeting the expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations through the staff handbook, weekly newsletters, observation feedback, as well as professional development sessions aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- School leaders used their school based option of six half days of professional development to provide training and to communicate expectation relevant to topics that promote improved student academic and behavioral outcomes. Topics addressed included the Danielson Framework for Teaching, Thinking Maps, the use of Students Annual Need Determination Inventory (SANDI) to drive instruction and school safety.
- The school community collaborates with a number of agencies to prepare students for transition to post-school college and career placements. To ensure that students have multiple opportunities to meet their transition goals, the school has partnered with the Salvation Army, Fort Hamilton Army Base, and area hospitals and has implemented partnerships with Fortune 500 companies and Wyckoff Hospital to provide part-time or full-time employment. Students in alternate assessment are required to full out a leveled career plan that reflects their interests and begin their work experiences in the school through the snack shop, building maintenance or office skills. Seven students have been placed in full-time employment as a result of the school's high expectations for post-school placements. During the current academic year, five students are enrolled in Cooperative Technical Education program providing them with opportunities to learn a trade in addition to the academic content.
- Parents articulated that that they value the communication they received from the school, referring to the open door policy, the communication notebooks, parent meetings and workshops, and academic and behavioral progress reports. As stated in the parent interview, the school has set "high expectations for each child to get to the point of being self-sufficient and going beyond what their parents thought they ever would." Another parent stated that by working to help the students achieve their academic and behavioral goals, teachers "gave parents their lives back; we can take our children anywhere."
- To foster a safe community of mutual respect and caring, the school has put in place across all sites a comprehensive behavior system that provides students with a matrix of expectations, teaches them the expected behaviors and recognizes positive student behaviors through either a point system or participation in a weekly raffle. The behavior system known as SCORE (Safety; cooperation; on time; respect and effort) is evident in the classrooms and hallways across the school and has resulted in a significant downward trend since the beginning of the year of over 50% fewer Levels 4 and 5 incidents and an accompanying increase in student participation in classes.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies reflect inconsistencies in demonstrating the school's beliefs about how students learn best as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. There are uneven levels of rigor reflected in student discussions.

### Impact

Student work products demonstrate low levels of thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders stated the instructional focus of the school emphasized the Danielson Framework for Teaching inclusive of effective questioning and that there would be evidence of questioning during whole and small group instruction in the classroom. In classrooms observed, teachers asked low level questions that did not require the students to extend their thinking. The discussion was predominantly teacher-to-student directed questions. As a result, there were limited opportunities for students to demonstrate that they learn best when teachers present high quality questions, as outlined in the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- Across the majority of classrooms, there was evidence of student groups and students being asked to work together on tasks, however in some cases the directions were not clear to students. For example, students were asked to develop a public works project for the school and to compare and contrast their project to the New Deal but had no guidelines or rubric to support them in completing the task. As a result there was uneven student participation in the tasks with missed opportunities for all students to demonstrate their understanding.
- During interviews, school leaders articulated beliefs that students learn best through the workshop model, which includes a mini-lesson, opportunities for guided and independent practice and sharing of what was learned during the lesson. In most lessons observed, there was no evidence of the teacher convening the students so that they could share what was learned, resulting in missed opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking and to be supportive of the learnings of their peers.
- School leaders articulated core beliefs that students learn best when presented with varied learning styles and that to support this belief students were aware of their learning preferences. To increase access for all learners to the curriculum, the school strategically implemented Thinking Maps, a visual routine for students to organize their thoughts and work with complex ideas and situations. Use of the Thinking Maps routine was evident in classroom and bulletin board displays and staff spoke about the training and follow-up support they received on Thinking Maps. In classes observed, students were able to use the Thinking Maps. However, once the map was completed, students expressed that they were finished and did not demonstrate use of the map to support their writing, thereby diminishing the impact of the use of the routines to support higher order thinking. In one class, the majority of time was spent on learning a routine using content not related to the book they were reading or the stated learning target.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school has worked to ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and other standards, integrating key instructional shifts across subject areas and grades. Academic tasks are refined using assessment data and student work.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions and refinement of tasks build curricular coherence that provides access to the curricula, increases cognitive engagement for all students and promotes college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- During the principal interview and teacher team meetings, school leaders and teachers articulated how they ensure all curricula are aligned to the Common Core and other content area standards and how the instructional shifts are coherently integrated across grades and subjects, specifically referring to academic vocabulary and writing from sources.
- Teachers of high school students in standardized assessment use EngageNY Common Core aligned curricula in English language arts (ELA) and follow the high school scope and sequence in mathematics, science and social studies, promoting access to college and career readiness for the students. The high school curricula are supported with teacher adapted materials and selected instructional resources to provide access to the curriculum for diverse learners. During 2013-2014, over 64% of students who took the English Regents exam passed with a 65 or better.
- To ensure that students in alternate assessment are engaged in rigorous learning tasks, teachers have collaborated to develop monthly performance tasks to supplement the Unique Learning Systems, a curriculum tailored to students in alternate assessment. Teachers and school leaders have supported implementation of the Unique Learning System with instructional guides that include the standards, big ideas, essential questions and instructional resources. Additionally, the guides delineate weekly pacing to ensure coherence across classrooms and provide "leveling up and leveling down" activities so that the curriculum is accessible to all learners.
- Recognition and concern by school leaders has led teachers to stimulate student interest and engagement by introducing relevant topics into the curriculum. ELA teachers collaborated to use backward design to develop their own module, "The Power of Music", incorporating the aspects of the EngageNY modules, including standards addressed, essential questions, vocabulary, skills, teaching strategies and strategies for students with disabilities and ELLs, instructional resources, and formative and summative assessments. During teacher interviews, teachers stated that since the implementation of "The Power of Music" students were engaged with the content, involved in the classroom discussions, and increasing the number of assignments completed.

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

The school administers common assessments in core subject areas and is beginning to use the results to identify a clear portrait of student mastery across classes and sites. Ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment were inconsistent across classrooms.

### Impact

Data from common assessments are being analyzed to support teachers in refining lessons and adjusting instructional practices. Teachers inconsistently use checks for understanding and student self-assessment to make adjustments during lessons.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a range of common assessments that include SANDI, Scantron, EdPerformance, unit and module pre- and post-assessments, and item analysis of student performance on Regents Competency Tests and Regents exams. Additionally to gain information about skills in reading, teachers administer the Informal Reading Inventory, as well as the Kaufman Test of Educational Assessment in math. The school's data specialist provides summaries of students' performance on assessments, however there is some inconsistent use of data by teachers of the data to identify trends or inform instructional groupings.
- Teacher interviews revealed there are some inconsistencies in how teachers assess progress and performance of students in the daily lesson. While some teachers stated that they used exit slips, class work, homework, and questioning, other teachers stated that they were not able to assess and record data on a daily basis. While emphasis was placed on students in alternate assessment being less dependent on prompting, there were inconsistent collections of data that tracked student progress towards independently completing tasks.
- Rubrics connected to the curricular units are present for a majority of student assignments and tasks and students were able to speak to their overall score on the rubric. There was inconsistency in student's understanding of each component of the rubric however, resulting in missed opportunities for students to address their next steps in the different skills outlined on the rubrics. Additionally, feedback on student work on display and shared in the student interviews was inconsistent and often vague, for example "nice job" and "good work" with regards to their strengths, limiting students' deep knowledge of their own performance.
- School leaders and teachers emphasize the importance of preparing all students for post-school transition. To ensure that students in alternate assessment are able to access the Career Plan the school adapted New York State's Career Plan Commencement for three levels of students, using text and picture symbols. Students self-assess and review the plan on a scheduled basis several times during the year and, to the extent possible, use the plans to provide students with experiences aligned to their interests.
- School leaders and teachers use SANDI to purposefully group students in math and English language arts. The practice of purposeful grouping was not observed in all classes for students in standardized assessment, resulting in uneven participation by some students in instructional groups.

<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 meet in structured professional collaborations to review student work and inform instructional practices connected to the Common Core and the instructional shifts.

**Impact**

Teachers develop and refine curriculum and share best practices around instructional next steps to support curricular coherence and improved student progress.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The majority of teachers meet in teacher teams two times a week to analyze student work, plan differentiated lessons, and incorporate learning activities for incorporating the instructional shifts into the pacing calendars and vocabulary development into the lesson plans. Each team uses a structured protocol to guide their collaborative process in analyzing student work as the basis for refinement of curriculum and performance assessments.
- A team of teachers of students in alternate assessment used SANDI to analyze the results of a writing assessment for students in Levels 2 and 3. Using the District 75 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) plan goal setting protocol, teachers identified seven of 44 students in need of improving end punctuation and discussed strategies for teaching the students these skills. Teachers reported that all students have shown improvement of approximately 10 to 20 points on the SANDI and that the skills students learned have generalized to writing across content areas.
- The high school curriculum team used student performance assessments and assignments from the module on terrorism to determine trends in writing that needed to be reinforced and incorporated an emphasis on writing skills in a subsequent module.
- During team meetings, teachers stated that they had increased their own instructional capacity as a result of participating in the professional collaborations. As observed in the team meetings, teachers consulted with each other to discuss student work and to discuss plans for implementing strategies shared by their colleagues. Teachers discussed how their collaborative team work helped ensure coherence within and across classes so that students in the alternate assessment program heard the same vocabulary from teachers and could work on developing their skills from one class to another.