



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Felisa Rincon de Gautier

32K376

**194 Harman Street
Brooklyn
NY 11237**

Principal: Maria Vera-Drucker

Date of review: December 3, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Lillian Druck

The School Context

Felisa Rincon de Gautier is an elementary school with 642 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 89% Hispanic and 2% White students. The student body includes 26% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.1%.

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	Celebration	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	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	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and staff ensure the alignment of curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards tactically integrate the instructional shifts. The school's coherent curricula promotes rigor and embeds academic tasks that promote critical thinking across grades and subjects for all learners.

Impact

Common Core aligned curricular units of study across subjects and rigorous academic tasks that integrate technology and the arts foster higher order thinking skills and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Project-based units in science and social studies engage students in conducting research which involves using technology and multiple skills sets to produce high quality publications. During the meeting with students from grades 3 to 5, they shared research projects titled Malala, the Powerful, Issues in Puerto Rico, and Native Americans: Customs and Beliefs, which they had produced through project based learning activities in their classrooms.
- The school's technology enrichment curriculum includes the NAO Humanoid Robot Coding Program and Lego Robotics. Lesson plans incorporate Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to provide access to learning for all students. During the visit, students from a special education class and a Talented and Gifted (TAG) class used their laptops to access the Coding Program to help reinforce basic multiplication facts.
- The school's Environmental Design Lab program provides opportunities for students across all grades to engage in observation, exploration and learning about environmental themes such as sustainability, urban gardening, wildlife preservation and the conservation of natural resources.
- Lesson plans across subjects cite the content area learning targets aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Lesson plans include academic tasks requiring students to dive deeper during a second read; use a discussion note catcher to synthesize information from the text; and use context clues to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words in order to deepen their understanding of texts. Group work includes Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions that scaffold across Levels 1 through 4 based on students' ability.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Strategic entry points in lessons and high quality supports for English language learners and students with disabilities vary across subject areas. Student discussions that prompt rich thinking and lead to ownership of the learning process are not fully embedded across all classrooms.

Impact

Some lessons did not fully demonstrate the ample refinement of instructional strategies to ensure strategic multiple entry points into the curricula in order to further promote ownership of learning in work products and student discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Artifacts such as charts describing Socratic Seminar protocols, conversation starters, discussion prompts and sentence stem charts are posted and available to students during lessons. However, evidence of high level student discussions reflecting ownership of learning and independent thinking was not observed across the vast majority of classrooms.
- Teachers use the Achieve 3000 program to access informational articles of different lexile levels to engage students in close reading activities according to their reading abilities. For example, in one class, students read “New Trees, Better Planet” at lexile levels 660, 780 and 980 based on their reading levels.
- In two classrooms, English language learners in the beginning stage of English proficiency worked on laptops with the Rosetta Stone Program while the rest of the class participated in reading activities such as close reading, shared reading, guided reading and responding verbally and in writing to teachers’ questions and prompts.
- In one of the classrooms, although the rest of the students transitioned from small groups to another component of the reading lesson, the small group of English language learners continued with the Rosetta Stone reading language activity and did not transition to the next lesson with the rest of the class.
- In one classroom, a group of English language learners at different language proficiency levels participated in a speaking activity focusing on vocabulary and descriptions related to the rainforest. The lesson did not provide additional visuals such as vocabulary cards, related texts or other appropriate resources to support the various language proficiency levels or to further increase the language skills of advanced students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders utilize a wide array of strategies and provide effective supports that embody a culture of mutual accountability for the school's high expectations. The school implements a range of venues that promote a positive partnership with families and engages them in supporting their children's progress.

Impact

High expectations communicated through verbal and written school-wide systems support a culture where accountability is reciprocal among all members of the learning community. Families participate in a culture of high expectations that deepens their understanding of college and career readiness skills and involves them in actively supporting their children in achieving success.

Supporting Evidence

- A chart that lists the names of teachers along with their area of expertise facilitates opportunities for inter-visitations among the staff. Teachers state that they visit each other based on the practices and skills they want to further enhance. For example, during the team meeting, one teacher stated that she visited a colleague to observe how he infused technology into lessons to increase student engagement.
- School leaders communicate high expectations through professional learning sessions, E-newsletters, emails, curricular planning meetings and observation feedback sessions with teachers. In addition, teachers stated that during common planning sessions and team meetings, they constantly engage in professional dialogue and share practices that contribute to their success in the classroom.
- The parent workshop calendar reflects 3 to 4 monthly sessions for families on topics that communicate and reinforce college and career readiness expectations. Workshop topics include: The Growth Mindset; Project-Based Learning; Sustainability Projects.
- Parents shared that the principal's open door policy, teachers' feedback on their children's progress in meeting grade benchmarks and information sessions on the Common Core Learning Standards help them support their children with school work and project-based learning activities at home. For example, a group of parents met with the math coach because they did not understand the "new" math. The math coach provided parents with an explanation of the skills students were expected to attain by the end of the unit and shared strategies to help their children at home.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teachers across the school participate in inquiry-based collaborative teams that use highly effective protocols to analyze classroom practice, examine assessment data and assess student work.

Impact

The school's positive culture of professional collaboration promotes shared leadership, strengthens teacher capacity, and contributes to school-wide instructional coherence and mastery of reading goals for target students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's prep schedule supports grade level common planning, vertical team communication, and refining of academic tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Inquiry-based teams engage in weekly check-ins to ensure the progress of target students in meeting six-week learning goals. For example, the current learning target focuses on the use of context clues to understand unfamiliar words.
- Grade level inquiry-based teacher teams analyze student work and discuss the progress of Level 2 subgroups of students in achieving mastery of goals specific to identified target skills requiring improvement. Teacher teams monitor student progress in meeting their learning targets. Analysis of Class Performance sheets reflect the movement of students toward mastery of targeted skills.
- During the vertical team meeting, teachers shared that the lesson study practices they engage in provides them with the opportunity to plan together and observe each other's lessons in a non-evaluative setting. They explained that they use low inference notes to discuss what went well, surface effective strategies and pose questions about the practices observed. One teacher stated, "These conversations make me think deeper about my practice".
- Grade level teams plan lessons that incorporate the Gradual Release of Responsibility. For example, they break down the specific teaching components so that lessons include transitions from teacher demonstration and guided practice to student independent practice and application.

Findings

The school uses common curriculum-aligned assessments, rubrics, and grading policies to acquire a clear understanding of student progress toward grade benchmarks.

Impact

Teachers across classrooms and teams make effective adjustments to curriculum and provide actionable feedback so that all students make progress towards meeting their goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders created an assessment calendar to provide a year-long plan for the administration of reading benchmark assessments, CCLS ELA and math baseline and culminating assessments, Go Math unit tests and New York City Performance assessments.
- In a first grade Integrated Co-Teaching class, teachers used baseline reading and writing assessment data to make adjustments to support students with organization, introductions and details in their opinion writing pieces. For example, teachers identified reading articles at different lexile levels and grouped students for instruction based on the identified needs surfaced through the analysis of the data.
- Students shared how they used the rubrics attached to their writing pieces as feedback regarding what they did well and how they could improve their work. One student stated, "I need to use more transitional words and clear language in my writing." Another student added, "Rubrics help us understand what we need to do to improve our work." Students also pointed out that their individual rubrics highlight the indicators mastered in yellow and next steps in blue.