



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

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**32K377**

**200 Woodbine Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11221**

**Principal: Dominic Zagami**

**Date of review: January 7, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

## The School Context

PS/IS 377 is an elementary and middle school with 531 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 81% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 26% 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%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<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 are engaged in inquiry-based, professional collaborations during which they analyze data and student work. There are opportunities for staff input into instructional decisions.

### Impact

The focused work during those professional collaborations helps strengthen teachers' instructional capacity and student progress towards goals. Further, teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly in grade team meetings, vertical bands, book clubs and/or study groups among other professional collaborations to analyze student work and teacher practice. During the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher team observation, teachers were analyzing student work using a protocol which asked questions such as “What does this student work tell us about student learning?”, “What do the students know and what are they able to do?”, “Was the assignment well designed to help students acquire knowledge and exercise skills?” Once teachers answered those questions, they identified some next steps for the students who had a strong start to the task and used precise vocabulary, yet had a disorganized ending. The teachers decided to support them by focusing on organization and giving them tools to scaffold the development of their writing.
- Teacher leaders represent the grade bands (kindergarten-2, 3-5, and 6-8) in the professional learning team. This enables teachers' voices to be heard during the development of professional learning sessions as well as help identify gaps that exist between grades as they analyze grade band data. This group helps guide the conversations around the expectations and the non-negotiables for teachers and students. They share trends identified across the grades in teaching and learning. For example, lesson planning was one focus on the vertical team's agenda thus teachers worked in the vertical team and then in their grade teams on the Danielson Framework for Teaching component 4A, reflecting on teaching, to strengthen teacher's practice with planning.
- Teachers are involved in developing professional learning communities and presenting problems of practice to one another in order to affect pedagogy. They are involved in a study group around Socratic Seminars with New York University (NYU) in order to develop practices that will promote student discussions in the classroom. They are asked to present the work they are doing in the social studies at the NYU Institute. The work will be led by the teachers in the pilot and replicated across the grades next school year.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student participation.

### Impact

Across classrooms, teacher practice is beginning to engage diverse learners in challenging tasks and discussions that result in meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- In six of the eight classes visited, students were engaged in work with a partner, in small collaborative groups or in guided reading groups reflecting the school's beliefs that students learn best in a cooperative environment. In a seventh grade science class, students were classifying rocks in groups and pushing each other's thinking when they disagreed on a classification. In a social studies class, students were working collaboratively to identify the similarities and differences between Cortes, Pizarro and Columbus. Yet, in many of the classrooms, there were students who demonstrated low levels of participation because they did not have the scaffolds, whether supports or extensions, necessary to appropriately engage in the discussions or the work. Across classrooms, students were frequently waiting for help to tackle or finish work.
- Across classrooms, teachers worked with students in small groups. However, in some classrooms, they did not interact with all the groups, missing the opportunity to encourage, guide and provide students with strategies that would help them accomplish the tasks. In one classroom, one kindergartener told me she wanted to read but did not know how. She simply stared at the book while the teacher was working with a group of students. In another classroom, a newly arrived English language learner (ELL) sat with a group but did not participate in the work being done because of a lack of scaffolds.
- Across classrooms, students were not always presented with appropriately challenging tasks. In one classroom, some students were engaged in work that did not challenge them. While some students were working in a guided reading group with the teacher, two students, working independently, were asked why they chose their book to read. They mentioned it was one they already knew and liked, a missed opportunity to engage them in a reading activity that could have pushed their thinking. In another classroom of ELLs, the students were engaged in a challenging task without the appropriate scaffolds. Many of the students were not able to complete the task and were waiting on the teacher to support them individually with the directions as she walked around. They did not seem to understand the word "vignette" used constantly by the teacher who even as she code switched kept repeating the word in English.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core, integrate the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions to build coherence. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Curricula is planned and revised to emphasize access to a diversity of learners and college and career readiness skills for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the City's suggested curricular resources to build instructional coherence and integrate college and career readiness across the grades. At the elementary level, teachers use Ready Gen and GoMath and at the middle school level, they use Code X and CMP3. This enables teachers to collaboratively plan for scaffolds and guided reading lessons as appropriate. Teachers also are able to differentiate or revise the curricular assessments, for example offer a task across days, if needed, and compare trends in data from common assessments given.
- Students are engaged in rigorous, engaging and relevant tasks. One project required students to read at least 8 articles over the course of a few weeks, complete an article form for each article with claims that the article best supports, and write a persuasive essay about the Marvel Controversy on who created the Marvel Universe Characters, Stan Lee, Jack Kurby or both.
- Using student work and data, school leaders and teachers have made adjustments to the curricular resources to meet the needs of their student body. Teachers incorporate Just Right Reading level books and modify some of the questions in the curricular resources. They have included guided reading in the curricula to meet the needs of their struggling readers based on Running Records and performance tasks data they've administered during their inquiry cycles.
- Three of the four lesson plans provided included scaffolding or ideas for differentiation. These strategies ranged from ways that differentiate the process, including the use of audio books for some vs text only for others and the use of visuals, to ways that differentiate the product. For example, some students in one classroom had a modified graphic organizer with sentence starters and less questions. Although these types of scaffolding were mentioned in three of the plans, they were only specific to groups of students in one of the lesson plans. This is work that is ongoing is the teacher teams as teachers continue to focus on 4A: reflecting on teaching.

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that provide limited feedback to teachers and students. Teaching practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**

Assessments providing limited feedback to students and teachers, and teachers inconsistently making effective adjustments to meet the needs of all learners have brought the school to understand the importance of designing assessment practices that will generate meaningful data and next steps to engage both students and teachers in meaningful self-reflective work.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During the student interview, half of the students shared work with limited actionable feedback from the teachers. Students' work, for the most part, were assessed with checks, number grades or parts of the rubric checked or circled, not giving students the information needed to understand their next steps and ways to achieve them. However, those who did receive actionable feedback found it essential as they worked on subsequent projects and tasks.
- During the class visits and in reviewing plans, there were inconsistent opportunities to check for understanding: some students did not get to interact with the teacher in class to clarify or support their questions and learning. Students inconsistently participated in self-assessment activities. In two classes, however, students were working in groups and were peer assessing. In one class, they were negotiating the reasons why a rock belonged or did not belong to a particular classification and in another class, they were brainstorming the characteristics of a character while agreeing and disagreeing with one another using text-based evidence.
- Teachers use rubrics and assessments that are loosely aligned to the curricula. During the teacher team meeting, teachers used a protocol that enabled them to focus on identifying students' strengths and areas in need of improvement as well as identify instructional next steps. This revealed that while feedback focused on students' ability to use text-based evidence and organization, the rubric used focused on vocabulary and the use of language, thus missing opportunities to provide teachers and students with clear and actionable feedback aligned with curricular goals.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff. They are developing and strengthening systems of accountability for those expectations as well as offering ongoing feedback and opportunities for families to partner with the school.

### **Impact**

Efforts to develop and strengthen the expectations that are connected to a path to college and career for students are beginning to enable stakeholders, including staff and families, to support student progress towards these expectations.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers and students talked about the expectations at the school being high. High expectations are communicated to all, but school leaders also shared that systems for accountability and support are still being strengthened. For example, teachers meet on a weekly basis for professional development around the Danielson Framework for Teaching, especially 3C, as one of the school's goals is to strengthen student engagement. However, the work with teachers in literary and science with Generation Ready has not yet started for the school year.
- Students and families celebrate academic and behavioral achievement with the school and are made aware of the high expectations for them through a variety of ways, including assemblies with guidance counselors, career week, and scheduled visits of middle school teachers to the lower grades to share the expectations of middle school with the students. Students have participated in college trips in the past and there are also planned trips to the theatre and corporations to help them acquire college and career readiness skills.
- School administrators and teachers have an open door policy with parents and allot time each Tuesday to meet with families. Progress reports and report cards are also sent home on a regular basis. However, parents voiced their concern around the lack of support for families and lack of communication with the school. One parent spoke about the struggle she has gone through with getting appropriate special education services for her child. Another spoke about not being heard when she requested additional native language supports for her daughter. Several asked for workshops for parents to learn English and better understand their children's academic work.