



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Foster-Laurie

Elementary School K397

**490 Fenimore Street
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Nancy Colon-Hernandez

**Date of review: May 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shenean N. Lindsay**

The School Context

Foster-Laurie is an elementary school with 314 students from grades pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 83% Black, 9% Hispanic, 4% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

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	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing
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	Proficient
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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders establish and consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to the entire staff, students, and families. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

There is a system of accountability for teachers that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and also provides supports and trainings to achieve those expectations. Students and parents receive ongoing and detailed advisement that prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal distributes a handbook every September which provides important information for staff such as expectations for attendance, classroom routines, lesson plans, and requirements for instruction. For example, a review of professional learning artifacts show teachers work together to create cohesive lesson plans and discuss expectations for teaching such as use of rubrics and close reading.
- The school distributes a monthly newsletter to families. As a result, parents are clear on what students are learning. One teacher stated that homework sheets are sent out each week and require the signature of parents. One parent stated, "If there is a problem, teachers will tell you the area students need help by writing a note on the homework sheet." Another parent stated, "During School Leadership Team meetings, we discuss the Common Core Learning Standards and what it means for our kids. I found out it helps them get ready for college."
- Teachers regularly conference with students to strengthen and support student learning. For example, one student stated, "When the teacher conferences with me, she tells me to try my best and says I can do more." Another student stated, "When the teacher conferences with me about how I am doing in class, there is a test-talk. We talk about how I did on the test". Thus, students are clear on their performance and steps needed to reach the next level using technology and peer tutoring. Parents are informed about student progress through distribution of progress reports quarterly.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Additionally, the school is in the process of developing their use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

There is limited feedback on student work and communication between teachers and administration is limited regarding student achievement. Student data is inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- During an interview with leadership, both the principal and assistant principal stated a grading policy is in place for upper grades of three, four, and five. However, there is no grading policy in place for lower grades of pre-kindergarten through second grade. Though the school leader provided a copy of the school's grading policy, teachers were unable to articulate it and the students were unfamiliar with it. As a result, most students are unclear of what is required to pass classes. One student stated, "If you get a lot of checks or stars on your work, that means you did a good job." As a result, student growth is minimal as evidenced from a review of math, social studies, and phonics unit assessment results.
- School-wide, there is a practice of using rubrics to assess student work. One student stated, "A rubric is a grading strategy used by the teachers for our work." However, most rubrics are generic and unrelated to the task. Furthermore, some feedback on student work states positive reinforcement such as "Excellent" or "Great Job" without actionable feedback. Some samples of student work have no feedback while other tasks have a checklist attached detailing areas completed properly or needs improvement. However, the feedback is often unrelated to the task or Common Core Learning Standards.
- Across classrooms, there is evidence of uneven assessment of student achievement through questioning and discussion to check for understanding. For example, in an English language arts lesson in second grade, the teacher assessed students through questioning and discussion, students cited evidence from the text, and built responses from one another. Also during a fifth grade English language arts lesson, the teacher checked for students' understanding through questioning and discussion, although, student responses were not tracked to make effective adjustments. Yet in a fourth grade English language arts lesson, while the teacher posed questions and started a discussion, the wait time between questions was short and questions were delivered in rapid-fire succession. Students were not provided the opportunity to answer or have their learning needs met. This also did not provide the teacher the opportunity to make effective adjustments to instruction.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders are in the process of aligning content standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits, and higher-order skills.

Impact

All students, especially those with disabilities and other sub-groups have limited access to engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, across all subjects and grades.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of teacher lesson plans across grades indicates inconsistent opportunities for students to engage in rigorous activities or critical thinking. For example, most lesson plans provide many opportunities for teachers to dominate the lesson. Tasks and activities are “one size fits all”, and there are very few opportunities for assessment throughout the lesson. Thus, most students are unable to have access to learning.
- The principal stated that pacing calendars in English language arts, math, social studies and writing were created based on an analysis of student performance to meet the needs of various learners as a result of State exams, school-based exams, and New York City Interim Assessments. However, a review of teacher lesson and unit plans indicates inconsistent implementation of instructional shifts, supports based on student needs and incomplete pacing calendars in some grades. For example, at the time of the report, a kindergarten-pacing calendar was incomplete for the months of March, April, and May. Additionally, there was no evidence of the aforementioned lesson planning. Further, a first grade lesson plan was completed for the entire school year, yet there was no evidence of multiple entry points for all students.
- The school is implementing an English language arts and math curricula, called Gheens, from the 2012-2013 Kentucky Core Academic Standards, and Jefferson County Public Schools. However, the curriculum does not provide opportunities for multiple entry points for all students to access the lessons. For example, a fifth grade curriculum map indicates standards and resources for all students. However, it is unclear how the standards will promote student learning for all as the curricula does not plan for multiple entry points for students with disabilities or English language learners.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points and are in the process of becoming aligned to the curricula and the school's belief about how students learn best.

Impact

There is uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products and tasks that are becoming informing by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

Supporting Evidence

- During a visit to a first grade classroom, all students were completing the same worksheet on two-dimensional shapes. The entire class was given the same task. Most students were engaged in the task and could articulate the purpose of the lesson which was identifying various shapes. However, there were several students in the classroom who did not completely understand the task as evidenced by questioning the students. One student stated and others agreed, "The work is too hard." The students sat idly while other students completed the task. Thus, this left some students without access or entry points to the activity.
- The principal stated, "We have been promoting questioning and engagement, and expect the teacher must monitor for understanding." However, this practice was inconsistent in four out of seven classrooms. In a kindergarten classroom, during a science lesson students were engaged in questioning and discussion with the teacher. The teacher asked questions such as, "The author wrote having a soda every now and then won't hurt you. What is the author saying?" Students were able to respond, citing examples from the text. Yet during a second grade English language arts (ELA) lesson the teacher dominated the lesson talking to students about the task she assigned them for fifteen minutes while students stared into the ceiling or doodled in their notebooks.
- While visiting most classrooms, structures are in place for differentiation of instruction but the implementation is uneven. For example, in a fifth grade class, students were completing activities independently, with a paraprofessional, or a teacher. However, four student groups were given the same task to complete. One group of students completed before the rest of the groups. But, the teacher did not check-in with the early-finishers or give them extension activities. Thus, students were idle and began talking and doodling on paper sitting idle. On the contrary, during a fourth grade ELA lesson students were divided in two groups for a guided reading activity. The classroom teacher worked with one group of students reading "The War with Grandpa" and the paraprofessional worked with another group using, "Jim Ugly". As a result, students were able to participate in a guided reading activity based on their current reading level.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams that may be loosely connected to school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Though teacher teams meet regularly, their use of an inquiry approach is developing across teams. Additionally, this work does not typically result in improved teacher practice or progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- During an interview with members of the teacher team, one person stated and others agreed, “There is a lot of professional development during teacher team meetings. We are still figuring out how to run our teacher team meetings.” Another member of the teacher team mentioned, “We are getting better at it. We are figuring out what we need to focus on like narrative writing, using rubrics, and building from one grade to another.” Thus, there was limited evidence of teacher team work connected to school goals.
- During the teacher team meeting, members were observed using a protocol for looking at student work. However, the findings of the team were surface-level and unaligned to expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards except for citing evidence from the text. For example, one teacher stated, “At this stage of the fourth grade, I’d say the student did a pretty good job citing evidence.” However, the Common Core Learning Standards were not used to analyze the student work in conjunction with the protocol.
- The work of the teacher team is currently focused on teacher needs, which does not always result in shift of pedagogy or student achievement on assessments. Though members of the teacher team stated that ELA running records are reviewed three times a year and math skills are assessed chapter-by-chapter, there was no concrete evidence demonstrating these assessment data are consistently used to adjust curriculum or differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners.