



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Walter Weaver School

Elementary School K398

**60 East 94th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Tammy Katan-Brown

**Date of review: January 22, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Clarence G. Ellis**

The School Context

PS 398 Walter Weaver is an Elementary school with 425 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 70% Black, 13% Hispanic, 1% White, and 13% other students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 22% 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 89.1%.

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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Across the school, teachers participate in structured teacher inquiry-based teams which address the instructional focus and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. The teacher team structure provides teacher leadership opportunities.

Impact

Inquiry-team collaborations are building teacher capacity which is leading to student progress. Distributive leadership structures allow teachers a voice to make key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During teacher team meetings, teachers plan for the implementation of the guided instructional format which includes a whole group mini-lesson, small group guided-practice, partner or paired independent practice and conferencing. They also plan tasks that require students to focus upon academic language acquisition, to analyze story elements, as well as to struggle with text-complexity. There is also a need to support the students in fluency in English language arts (ELA) and math. Additionally, there is a need to focus on deconstructing math word problems. For example, during the teacher led-teacher inquiry team meetings, teachers held each other accountable as they analyzed student work samples in math on tile design and assessment data to determine student performance trends and to discuss concerns and next steps in refining curricula and instruction.
- School leadership support teachers at team meetings via sharing strategies and best practices through inter-visitations. Teacher leaders organize inter-visitations and conduct demonstration lessons to highlight exemplars of effective instructional practices. Several teachers mentioned how this practice helped improve their instructional delivery.
- During the teacher team meetings, it was shared that the building leadership encourages a culture that highlights effective instructional practices, and allows teams to contribute to the professional development plans. This distributed leadership model, along with attending professional development workshops, turn-keying learning opportunities, working collaboratively with the co-located school, and working closely with the network, has created a culture of ongoing adult learning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school is beginning to employ the use of common assessments, checks for understanding, and student self-assessment to measure student progress towards goals across grades.

Impact

Although the school has created assessment structures to measure student learning, these structures do not consistently lead to the necessary adjustments that address students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses common assessments, such as periodic assessments, unit tests, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), and state assessments to identify students' progress, as well as student needs. The goal of this practice is to create a clear picture of students' progress toward goals across grades and subjects, track progress, and adjust curricula and instructional decisions in order for students to demonstrate increased mastery. Yet the school has inconsistently gathered information from these sources to address progress for all students. For example, one fifth grade teacher adjusted her lesson to allow for students' adjustment to text complexity via the incorporation of contextual cues. Another fifth grade teacher did not make a similar adjustment to meet all students' needs. Inconsistency was evident across grades. In third and fourth grade classes this inconsistency was evident in math, whereby the teacher provided explicit instruction and independent practice, but did not adjust instruction once it was established that the students were having difficulty with the concepts.
- Although teachers and school leaders have access to data from formative and summative assessment sources, in addition to individual work products, they inconsistently use the information from these sources to make curricula and instructional adjustments. For example, the formative assessments have indicated that there is a need to improve students' writing. As a result, leadership has instituted journal writing in every subject and student self-reflections to strengthen students' writing across content areas with accompanying rubrics. However, some teachers offered relevant feedback to student journal writing to move students from one level to the next, while several others did not offer actionable feedback.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of checks for understanding including teacher-generated questions, and students' self-assessments based upon rubrics, inconsistently lead to instructional adjustments that address all learners including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. During a third grade classroom visit, the checks for understanding for academic language acquisition and text complexity was the use of quick writes and exit slips, mid-lesson interruption, and continuous circulation providing individual assistance as needed. Yet, in several other classrooms the class checks for understanding weren't clearly established or did not occur. For example, in one first grade class, although instruction occurred around using tens and ones to add two-digit numbers, there was no clarity around the use of base ten blocks as a next step. Also, in a second grade class, although students had time to self-asses their work, they did not have the rubric.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leaders and faculty have aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards with the integration of the instructional shifts. Critical thinking skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades and subjects.

Impact

The curricular planning promotes coherence which promotes college and career readiness. Tasks across grades and content areas encourage higher-order thinking for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Literacy planning units emphasize norming activities for determining text complexity, modeling of close reading strategy, and the annotation of text, including deepening of comprehension and academic language acquisition. For example, in a fifth grade unit plan, the long term targets are for the students to cite text-based evidence, to identify character traits, to demonstrate how authors use sensory images to describe a setting, and to compose a reading-response task while analyzing Johanna Spyri's *Heidi*. Similarly, in unit plans from grades three and four, the long term targets are for the students to describe a character in depth, and refer to details and examples from the text, thus demonstrating coherence and alignment to the instructional shifts.
- Lesson plans and curriculum maps indicate that the school uses Common Core Learning Standards, Ready Gen, Go Math, as well as the New York City Department of Education core scope and sequence for social studies and science, which is supplemented with First Option Science Systems (FOSS) Kits. The school employs the use of guided instruction across content areas, inclusive of flexible grouping, moving from whole group, guided practice, small group, and independent practice, based upon student needs.
- The second, third, and fourth grade level plans also indicate that teachers utilize NEWSLA, a website that provides tiered by Lexile reading level, nonfiction high-interest news articles, to increase students' exposure to non-fiction texts. The school utilizes Go Math embedding additional multi-step real world problem solving to support students in striving for accuracy. The school continues to develop curriculum maps that integrate the Common Core and instructional shifts in English language arts and math. The teachers are in the process of expanding the curriculum maps to include standards from the New York City scope and sequence in science and social studies to support the school's goal of refining coherence and college and career readiness.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has aligned teaching practices with the beliefs about how students learn best. The focus upon multiple entry points and the use of instructional shifts are consistent.

Impact

As pedagogy is aligned and reflects practices that focus on the instructional shifts and informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the consistencies result in the engagement of all learners in appropriately challenging tasks that promote students' demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school belief of how students learn best, informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, includes engaging students in discussion via depth of questioning and the use of varied hands-on activities. For example, in a kindergarten class, in order to promote students' participation and critical skill development, the teacher asked students to comment on classmates' input, questions, and concerns using accountable talk stems. In a first grade math class, the students were focused on place value understanding and properties of operation to add and subtract. They were asked to explain their strategies to solve the problems, and students challenged and supported each other's responses. This process of explaining strategies was evident across classrooms.
- A fourth grade teacher conducted a lesson that was rigorous providing differentiated and tiered support to all of her students. During this lesson, the teacher directed the students to write and identify equivalent fractions in the simplest form by drawing models, writing to demonstrate and process understanding. During several classroom visits including grades 1, 2, and 3, it was evident that students were encouraged to provide evidence and proof of understanding, both verbally, and in writing.
- In a fifth grade science class students were asked to interpret information from a passage on biomes, major ecological communities, and formulate their own conclusions. The students explained their reasons that rainforests are important, citing text-based evidence. Students were provided sentence stems for use as a scaffold. There was evidence of student inquiry, hands-on engagement, peer discussion, as well as teacher conferencing. During many of the lessons there was evidence of student discussion, engagement, and elements of rigor.
- Across classrooms, scaffolds that support ELLs and students with disabilities were evident. For example, the academic intervention services (AIS) teacher in first, second, and fourth grade classrooms provided additional support to students who achieve at the lowest third. In a fourth grade class the AIS teacher supported students in the area of writing via sentence stems. In first and second grade classes the AIS teacher provided tiered task cards. In the area of math for grades two and four, the teachers provided differentiated explanations.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school consistently communicates high expectations and aligns professional development activities to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. There are a number of school-wide communications and frequent student performance updates that keep families informed of their children's development towards college and career readiness.

Impact

The school's structures for communication and systems of support result in staff and families working towards a clear path of higher student achievement and college and career readiness. School leaders provide staff training and have a system of accountability for those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching to inform classroom instructional practices and communicates expectations to teachers and staff during professional development workshops and during individual teacher meetings. The principal and her assistant principals, along with lead teachers, collaborate with network support staff in order to provide ongoing training on the effective implementation of the Danielson Framework. One of the training sessions set the expectations of the Danielson Framework Domains, and several others were focused upon Domain 3, particularly student engagement and checking for understanding.
- School leadership holds the staff accountable via formal and informal observations and provides high leverage feedback during one-on-one conferences. These conferences are conducted in order to ensure that students are engaged in activities that are cognitively challenging. Feedback to one teacher included a discussion on the development and inclusion of essential questions to ensure that students are clear and focused during the lesson. This demonstrated clear alignment to the professional development plan that had included a session on creating and implementing essential questions.
- During the parent interview, parents expressed that the school leadership and staff are caring and nurturing and maintain ongoing communication with families. These include workshops to add clarity around the Common Core Learning Standards, specifically how parents can support their children to be prepared for Common Core assessments. Additional school outreach to parents includes weekly progress updates, phone calls, and regular grade conferences. In an effort to prepare the students for college and career readiness, the staff supports the students with improving their organizational skills. Teachers support students in developing effective note taking skills. Once a month, parents are invited to come to the school and describe their jobs and careers to the students as early as pre-kindergarten. They also have the fourth and fifth graders visit the middle schools so they are exposed to the next level. Additionally, the fifth graders are encouraged to discuss which college that they plan to attend, as well as prepare sample college personal essays.