



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brooklyn Arbor Elementary School

Elementary School K414

**325 South Third Street
Brooklyn
NY 11211**

Principal: Eva Irizarry

**Date of review: May 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone**

The School Context

Brooklyn Arbor Elementary School is an elementary school with 441 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade four. The school population comprises 3% Black, 68% Hispanic, 25% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.1%.

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	Well Developed
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

Aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, curricula strategically integrate higher order skills in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

All students are exposed to higher level tasks across grades and subjects allowing them to demonstrate their thinking, thus leading to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum is continuously refined and adjusted to respond to the school's instructional focus on making thinking visible which has been purposefully aligned to the Common Core standards, the instructional shifts, the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and the Depth of Knowledge (DoK) indicators. For example, the math curriculum was changed to EngageNY to emphasize fluency, problem solving, and depth over breadth. To emphasize fluency, the curriculum is supplemented by an internet-based program, Xtra Math. The second grade reading workshop is supplemented with Core Knowledge which incorporates explicit vocabulary instruction, fiction and non-fiction texts, and higher order questions and tasks. Teachers College Reading and Writing units are supplemented with Core Knowledge and an internet-based vocabulary program, Flocabulary.
- Curricula and tasks embed rigorous habits across grades using project-based learning and the DoK indicators, requiring students to create their own meaning, and use what they have learned to solve real-world problems. Engaged in experiential, interdisciplinary unit projects, second graders presented ideas to solve the problem of flooding during hurricanes, and answered the questions, "How did the Lenape and Dutch Communities in New York use natural resources of the area to meet their needs?", and "How can we make bridges between Brooklyn and Manhattan safer and more efficient?"
- Differentiated tasks meet the learning needs of students. For a fourth grade math problem, one graphic organizer asks, "equation ... picture/model ... choose a strategy" while another graphic organizer asks, "one way to solve ... another way to solve ... an additional strategy to solve..." Scaffolds are strategically provided for English language learners and students with disabilities.
- A collaboratively--developed lesson plan template is widely used and adapted to ensure a consistent approach to lesson planning across grades and subjects with a particular emphasis on interdisciplinary connections as well as DoK levels. A review of lesson plans reveals a range of DoK questions and tasks, connections to other disciplines, and accommodations and differentiation strategies for different groups of students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across the school, teaching strategies allow all students to be engaged in challenging tasks, yet active participation by all students varies across classrooms.

Impact

Curricular extensions across classrooms support students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to participate actively and take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, entry points to engage students include student grouping by level, task variation, use of the SMARTboard, charts, visuals, manipulatives, white boards and graphic organizers. In a first grade math lesson on ordering and comparing length measurements, one graphic organizer asked students to select an object, estimate its length in cubes and provide an explanation while the other asked students to pick three objects and draw and label them in order from shortest to longest. In a second grade dual language class students were placed in linguistically balanced groups. In a fourth grade lesson on area and perimeter, early finishers were to complete a problem solving task after answering the essential question. While some entry points included tasks to challenge students at higher levels, strategic supports and extensions varied across classrooms.
- Across classes visited, students were exposed to challenging tasks requiring students to demonstrate higher order thinking. Students and teachers often communicated through a system of gestures used and understood throughout the school to push for extended thinking. In a fourth grade math lesson on solving area problems, one child explained her work at the SMARTboard. Through a gesture, another child “asked” for elaboration. The child at the board proceeded to give an explanation.
- Throughout the school, there is a focus on making thinking visible as is described by the school’s instructional focus. Students demonstrated the capacity to extend their thinking in whole group settings. In a second grade lesson on investigating the pattern of even numbers in the ones place and relating to odd numbers, one student at the chart board explained her work. When the teacher probed the class to see who had done it differently students proceeded to engage in a discussion where one student maintained that 13 is odd because 3 is odd in the ones place. Another student arrived at the conclusion that 30 is even because one can count by 2 to reach it and 3 is in the tens place. Another student theorized that it was even because it is the sum of doubles, $15 + 15$, but saw that that did not work when doubling 13. In a first grade class, students were asked to discuss in a group whether to place items on a “want” column or “need” column. Students grappled with such items as a bicycle and argued for either want or need. In one case, they solved the issue by putting the item in the middle of the two columns, having discussed the idea at length. While in some classes, students were afforded rich topics for discussion and time to discuss them, in other classes, partner or small group discussion opportunities were conducted in whole group settings where some students remained silent, or discussions were largely limited to quick “turn and talk” activities that did not allow student-to-student discussion around a problem requiring thinking deeply to probe an issue, and question or critique their peers so as to take ownership of their learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across grades and departments, teachers create and use common assessments that offer a comprehensive overview of student progress, providing information to make curricular and instructional adjustments, and give actionable and meaningful feedback to students.

Impact

The school's assessment practices have resulted in all students demonstrating improved mastery across content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback to students is meaningful and actionable offering guidance to students to engage in next steps. For example, in response to a student's math work, a teacher wrote, "Next time, make it a two-step problem by adding on a second question. For example, 'If Abigail loses 41 hairpins, how many does she have now?'" Other comments include, "Next time, try to vary your transition phrases (One reason...another reason...) so your writing is more interesting. Try using: For example...In other words...In addition..." "Next time, answer the question more directly. For example: So he solved it by finding the sock in the laundry room." "You did a good job trying to use the strategies we learned. However, your answer is incorrect. Remember to set up your chips separately for each addend." Below that comment, the teacher drew a labeled diagram to give explicit direction.
- Across subject areas and grades, assessments are aligned with the school's curricula and along with teacher-facing as well as student-facing rubrics are used to collect information on student performance. Teachers have made adjustments to assessments in response to student performance levels. Module assessments were reformatted, and questions revised and repeated in subsequent assessments to measure growth. During grade meetings, teachers across all grades engage in a "data story" protocol to analyze student work and plan and modify next instructional steps. The protocol includes phase 1 – predictions, phase 2 – observations based on the data, and phase 3 – inferences. Desired outcomes based on the Common Core standards are identified as are implications for teacher planning and preparation to surface gaps. Based on these detailed descriptions, students are grouped based on level and need including English language learners and students with disabilities. Once instructional strategies and interventions have been implemented, teachers consider what gaps were closed from pre to post assessment, what continues to be a gap, and how teaching will be revised to further close remaining gaps. In this way, consistent cycles to develop data stories ensure a clear portrait of student mastery.
- Assessment data is continuously tracked to present a clear picture of student progress towards goals and curriculum and instruction are adjusted so that all students can move to the next level. For example, a review of fourth grade math assessment data revealed areas that, as a grade, were challenging for students which included, multiplying and dividing by 1 and 2 digit numbers, factors, multiples and patterns, fraction equivalence and comparison, and adding and subtracting fractions. Multi-step word problems and explaining answers were challenges across all units. Areas of focus for instruction included the rectangular model for multiplication and division, and ordering and comparing fractions.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Leadership and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress towards high expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

The school has a culture of mutual accountability and staff takes ownership of improving their own practice and establishing partnerships with parents that result in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- To support the school-wide instructional focus on making thinking visible, school leaders have disseminated a number of informational documents which include guidelines on project-based learning, classroom environment, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), as well as a collaboratively-developed lesson plan template. Staff engage in training opportunities so that the entire school community is focused on this goal in order to increase pedagogical capacity and refine opportunities for all children to succeed. For example, teachers participate in learning walks where all staff shares findings and wonderings to formulate next steps to ensure that all teachers are accountable for addressing the school-wide instructional focus and improving classroom practice. A key guiding question surfaced by teachers is, “How can we ensure that tasks require student thinking across all content areas?” During a teacher meeting one teacher said, “We benefit from our visits. I looked at how my peers are doing it.” Another teacher said, “We plan together and we use Dropbox to share our lesson plans.”
- Training for staff has included a school-wide session to develop common instructional vocabulary with input for all teachers so that common understanding and definitions are shared by all staff on such concepts as, “higher-order thinking”, “actionable feedback”, “multiple entry points”, and “college and career readiness.”
- High expectations are reinforced in lesson observations that explicitly refer to classroom practices discussed through various venues. For example, one comment read, “Plan each lesson thoughtfully with your co-teacher. Decide which Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) model will best support the needs of your students. Review the attached handout that describes the various models and the recommended usage of each one. Another comment read, “After attending the professional development session, “The Power of Two” I would encourage you to use the parallel model for teaching this lesson.”
- Teachers partner with families to support student progress. During a parent meeting, parents spoke about ongoing verbal and written communication and ongoing feedback from teachers through a variety of means including emails, one-on-one conferences, and phone calls. They spoke about workshops on Common Core as well as on the school practice of project-based learning that have deepened their understanding of college and career readiness expectations and have given them a variety of tools to empower them to help support their children in meeting or exceeding those expectations. One parent described how a teacher provided assistance. “Check (your children) for understanding. Did it make sense? Encourage detail. Instead of ‘it’, have them tell what the ‘it’ is. Ask open-ended questions.” Another parent said, “Teachers use a responsive classroom. They genuinely care about our students. If issues come up they say, ‘let’s sit together and talk it out.’”

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in consistently examining teacher practice, assessment data, and student work within inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed teacher leadership is embedded across the school

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect teaching and learning across the school resulting in continuous shared improvement of teacher practice and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations to develop, share, and implement practices based on the Common Core instructional shifts thereby strengthening teacher capacity and increasing student achievement on a grade and across grades. For example, during the second grade teacher team meeting observed, teachers used the “Looking at Student Work and Surfacing Gaps” protocol. They examined the rubric results of an opinion writing piece and determined trends that included confusion between opinion words and examples and evidence that did not support reasons. Next steps determined by the second grade teachers included shared writing in small groups with a teacher to guide them, explicit language objectives for English language learners, and whole group instruction on reasons versus evidence. Teachers spoke about how their work influences their own grade and connecting grades. In describing the process, one teacher said, “We connect with the third and fourth grade rubrics and we discuss our findings with the upper grades.” Constant dialogue ensures coherence.
- Teachers on a grade team consistently examine student and teacher work and keep a binder of next steps as they implement collaboratively-devised strategies to improve student achievement thus strengthening their instructional capacity and promoting implementation of the Common Core standards. For example, when the second grade teachers examined student work in response to word problems in math that introduced multiplication and division, they noted that students were having problems when a question included addition and subtraction. The team then revised their plans to include additional work on addition and subtraction. By examining the units of connecting grades against their own work, teachers are aware of what needs to be flexibly moved. One teacher said. “We’ll go back and spiral in things from first grade including knowledge of place value. We learned not to be so married to the map. We’ve changed it three times this year.”
- Teachers have demonstrated leadership in playing an integral role in key decisions regarding student and adult learning. Teachers researched Core Knowledge and teams agreed to incorporate it into the literacy curriculum. When they determined that Go Math did not offer the types of open-ended questions that would best align to the demands of the Common Core standards, teachers brought in EngageNY units to incorporate into the math curriculum. Teacher team discussions have brought up the issue of incorporating reciprocal teaching to enhance the focus on making thinking visible. Teacher-led professional learning communities allow teachers to select topics within the overarching school-wide instructional focus which include questioning and designing tasks.