



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Spring Creek Community School

19K422

**1065 Elton Street
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Christina Koza

**Date of review: January 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Renee Peart-Zachary**

The School Context

Spring Creek Community School is a secondary school with 232 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 76% Black, 20% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Asian, and 2% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

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	Focus	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	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high instructional expectations and there is a culture of mutual accountability amongst teachers. Furthermore, students are provided with clear feedback and advisement supports that help learners, including students with disabilities, take ownership of their educational experiences.

Impact

School leaders provide training supports and school staff has a system for shared accountability that is resulting in staff and students being fully informed about school-wide expectations and students are receiving guidance supports that help them prepare for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide staff with documents such as the staff handbook with instructional sections on Danielson Framework for Teaching Domains, student portfolio guide, Data Inquiry Protocol guide, Spring Creek Community School Habits of Mind, and morning announcements via Google Docs, that consistently informs the staff about school-wide instructional expectations.
- Teachers volunteer to visit their colleagues' classrooms and provide their peers with verbal and written feedback align to Danielson Framework for Teaching components. The feedback is shared in teacher team meetings as well as informal daily conversations with their peers. Moreover, the United Federation of Teachers union representative said, "The school has a culture of cohesiveness and teachers hold each accountable because they enjoy learning and growing from each other."
- In the summer of 2014, school leaders conducted a three-day professional development session on topics on team building, goal setting, lesson planning, curricula expectations, data inquiry process, Danielson Framework for Teaching Domains, and the Quality Review Rubric. Furthermore, school leaders and teacher leaders provide weekly professional development on these topics. Teachers reported that they are held accountable for instructional expectations through formal and informal observations where they receive immediate verbal and written feedback from school leaders.
- The students attend weekly advisory periods where they review their portfolios, discuss academic progress, and take ownership of their learning by developing academic goals with action plans. Moreover, students create goals that are revisited and revised in six-week cycles. Students reported that they feel the school is preparing them for next grade level because they have multiple opportunities where they are engaged in challenging tasks and teachers are consistently informing them about what is expected of them in high school and college.
- Teachers communicate high expectations to students through documents such as grade-level student newsletters, student curricula contracts, and course syllabi. One student said, "I am fully aware of what is expected of me in my classes because I receive comments from my teachers through Google Classroom." Another student said, "If I need help with what is expected of me in my classes, teachers make themselves available by helping me before school, during lunch, and after school."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and staff align curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and refine curricula so that learners have access to rigorous tasks yet strategic integration of the instructional shifts and precise modifications for specific subgroups, such as the highest achieving learners, are not embedded practices across the school.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions are building coherence and promoting college and career readiness for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. However the adaptation to the school's curricula is not maximizing the cognitive development of scholars, including all subgroups.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of unit plans across content areas included tier one planned intervention strategies such as visual cues, redirection, and re-teaching. Additional supports for students with disabilities are also included in the unit plans such as use of graphic organizers, writing prompts and chunking the text. However, modifications to support higher achievers were not consistently evident in unit plans reviewed. Higher achievers were given the same academic tasks as other learners.
- Unit plans in all content areas promote college and career readiness as it includes Common Core Learning Standards, objectives, essential questions, content skills, vocabulary, assessments, learning plan, differentiated instruction for students with disabilities, and the instructional shift of evidence-based claims. However, across subject areas purposeful and deliberate integration of the instructional shifts were not evident in unit plans reviewed. All unit plans, with the exception of math, had the same common instructional shift.
- Teacher teams have weekly common planning time where the plan and refined curricula and academic tasks. Teachers and teams of teachers review assessment results and student work products to make adjustments to unit and lesson plans. For example, the 6th grade team developed additional short response tasks and a student self-assessment tool to refine an English Language Arts (ELA) unit that focused on evidence-based claims. However, the practice of refining curricula to enhance all subgroups, particularly higher achievers, was not consistently evident in curricula guides, unit plans, and lesson plans reviewed.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. Teachers are working towards consistently providing high quality supports and extensions into the curricula, to ensure that student work reflects ownership of learning.

Impact

Teacher practice across classrooms provide students with appropriately challenging tasks. However, all learners are not yet fully provided with extensive supports and students have limited opportunities to demonstrated ownership in meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a 6th grade ELA class, students worked in pairs to find a quote that had one criteria they thought is the most important for helping to stop the portrayal of teens as stereotypes. Students used an annotated article, main idea sheet, and source cards to find their quotes. Then, students shared out their partners' responses using a think-aloud approach and provided each other with feedback. Students engaged in high-level discussions and took ownership of the lesson as they pushed each other to support their claim with text-based evidence. This high level of student discussions that reflect student ownership was observed in only two out of seven classrooms visited.
- In a 7th grade science class, students were learning about the different functions of the nervous system and how it allows them to receive information from both the internal and external environment. Students were asked to create a problem that investigates the chosen independent variable, write a hypothesis, produce materials, create procedures, and collect data with their groups. Students were analyzing data and discussing three specific claims about the data. While many classes visited provided evidence of students engaged in higher-order discussions, this example of high-level student work products, discussions where students used critical thinking skills, and student ownership is not yet an entrenched practice across the school.
- In a 7th grade ELA Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were asked to cite examples of how poverty influences one's decision-making. Using the Answer by turning the question around, Cite a quote from a text, and Explain your answers (ACE) Approach, students cited evidence from the novel *Scorpions* by Walter Dean Myers and completed an ACE graphic organizer. Students were provided with many high quality supports and extensions into the curricula such as pre-print graphic organizers, expansion of writing tasks for selected students, posted checklists, heterogeneous pairing of students, timer, visual aids, different tasks for higher achievers, and purposeful grouping based on current data. These teachers provided extensive supports to the students. While many classes visited provided evidence of use of multiple entry points into the curricula, this practice of providing multiple high quality supports was not consistently observed across classrooms visited.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, grading policies, and rubrics align to the school's curricula and provide students with actionable, meaningful feedback. Furthermore, teachers' assessments practices include various checks for understanding and student self-assess their work.

Impact

Students are consistently receiving teacher and peer feedback that informs their next learning steps and learners have valuable information that can help them improve their progress and performance.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teachers check for understanding using various methods such as teacher observations, exit slips, cold call questioning, checklists, and recording formative assessment data to capture students' strengths and common misunderstandings. Teachers used the data collected to conduct a midpoint check and made adjustments to the lesson. For example, in an 8th grade ICT social studies class, the teachers recorded students' responses to analyzing visual art from the Harlem Renaissance period. The teachers discussed their findings, adjusted the pacing of the lesson, and explained samples of the visual art to support students in their analysis and assist learners in their understanding of the task.
- Each department has a grading policy aligned to the school's curricula and teachers use curricula aligned rubrics and assessments. Students are provided with rubric-based feedback on assessments and teacher feedback via online in Google Classroom on other student work products. Additionally, a review of students work displayed on the hallway and classroom bulletin boards and work products in student portfolios provided evidence that students receive written, actionable feedback and clear next steps. A review of student work products indicated that students receive comments from teachers such as "to improve your score include relevant evidence, add more details and put details in logical order" and "next time please revisit the text to provide specific details and use vocabulary terms reviewed".
- Students reported that teachers in every subject area inform them of how to improve their work, their peers give feedback on next learning steps, and rubrics are given to help them assess their work. A review of student work products indicated students receive comments from their peers such as "you should add commas to your run-on sentences", "you need more details to support your claim", and "this is unclear, please elaborate". Furthermore, students reported that the Google Classroom allows them to put their work online and receive immediate feedback from teachers while their work is still in progress.
- Students self-assess their work by using various documents such as self-editing forms, peer-editing forms, rubrics, and completing a student work product reflection sheet. Students are given work product reflection sheets in all subjects areas where they must describe the goal of the task, explain why they chose the work product to be included in their portfolios, explain what did they do well on the task, and analyze what skills did they attain or improved upon by completing the task. Evidence of these reflection documents was observed in student portfolios.

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

The vast majority of teacher teams are engaged in inquiry based collaborations that enhance pedagogical practices and stimulate the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Furthermore, school leaders have embedded structures in place that enhance teacher leadership.

Impact

Teacher leaders are an integral part of school-wide key decisions and the work of teacher teams is resulting in instructional coherence across the school and increased student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level and department teams meet formally twice a month and informally 3 - 4 times a week. During these team collaborations, teachers use the Data Inquiry Protocol to examine assessment results and student work products where they complete a data reflection sheet. Each team has a focus, goal, and action plan. For example, the ELA department wanted to focus on crafting short responses aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers developed lessons to support students' struggles on short responses. They re-taught specific skills and administered a Common Core aligned assessment. Students are now improving in short responses as evidenced by the post-baseline assessment results. In September 2014, in grade 6, 53% of the students were below standards in short responses, 47% were approaching standards and 0% was meeting standards. As of January 2015, 13% of the students are below standards in short responses, 65% are approaching standards, and 21% are meeting standards.
- Teacher teams use an inquiry approach to examine groups of student data, identify struggles, re-teach skills, and re-assess. For example, the math department team reviewed the New York City Common Core aligned-baseline assessments for grades 6, 7 and 8 and determined that across the grades, students struggled with demonstrating standard mastery in foundational skills and numeracy. Students struggled with multi-step ratios and proportion problems. Teachers re-taught specific skills and introduced the Annotation and Problem-Solving Protocol to students. Teacher saw an increase in 35% of 6th grade students meeting standards in applying and extending understanding of multiplication and division, 32% of 7th grade students met standards in using properties of operations to generate equivalent expressions, and 56% of 8th grade students met standards in expressions and equations work with radicals and integer exponents.
- The grade team leaders, department chairs, lead teachers, and special education cabinet meet with school leaders once a month to discuss instructional decisions and student progress. Moreover, school leaders meet with the founding cabinet team that is made up of teachers who were an integral part of writing the proposal for the opening of this school. School leaders provided agendas and minutes from these meetings. Teacher leaders reported they have an integral role in school-wide decisions that affect student learning. For example, teacher leaders implemented the Google Classroom that provides teachers with an online app that allows students to receive actionable feedback on their work. Teacher leaders also created a curricula newsletter that gives parents and students information on curricula expectations. Google Classroom and the curricula newsletters are now implemented across the school.