



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The School of Discovery

20K503

**330 59th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Bernadette Fitzgerald

**Date of review: November 17, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Karina Costantino**

The School Context

P.S. 503, The School of Discovery is an elementary school with 1,084 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 77% Hispanic, 4% White, and 18% Asian students. The student body includes 55% English language learners and 21% 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 95.

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	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	Well Developed
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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teams of teachers meet on and across grades using various formative and summative assessments to discuss students through an inquiry approach. This provides distributive leadership roles for teachers as they assume facilitator roles during the discussions.

Impact:

As a result of purposeful and effective teacher team meetings, teachers are able to determine the specific needs of students, differentiate tasks and implement strategies leading to increased student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- The teachers use a co-teaching model of instruction that enables them to differentiate and scaffold instruction towards individual student need in all classes across grades.
- Data analysis is embedded in each team meeting on and across grades. Using a protocol for every team meeting, the presenting teacher discusses a student's strengths and areas of need. For example, during the special education team meeting, every teacher that services the student was present. Using a specific protocol for team discussion, each teacher was able to discuss the student through their specific lens, providing the entire team with a thorough understanding of the child's behavior in different settings. The social worker was a valuable member of the team, as she provided information around the social and emotional aspects of the case. This approach provided the team with a complete understanding of the student's successes and challenges to date, enabling the team to determine a plan of assistance that would best meet the student's needs moving forward.
- The principal strongly believes in empowering teachers by having them assume leadership roles and many teachers attend different professional development sessions outside the school. Upon their return, they turnkey for the rest of the staff. All liaisons for special education, grade leaders, literacy and math coaches are teachers. They play a major role in all decisions that affect teaching and learning. In addition, they are deeply rooted in the day-to-day operations of the school, serving as a conduit for teacher input.
- The teachers, as they expressed during the teacher team meetings spend a great deal of time answering the question, "What does a year's growth look like for each individual student?" Teachers' norm the assessments used on each grade during team meetings and once done, look at the students that have achieved success of a year's progress. Working then with a targeted group of students, they discuss student goals and set benchmarks to track progress, targeting areas of need until the student has achieved mastery.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings:

In the vast majority of classrooms, teacher pedagogy demonstrates a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best and teacher practice is engaging, rigorous and aligned to the curriculum. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points and supports into the curriculum so that all learners are engaged.

Impact:

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- All teacher goals focus on the highly effective level in the Danielson Framework by working on giving students ownership of learning through the station teaching model. In addition, all teachers flexibly group students to help them better meet their individual goals.
- The social studies liaison teachers focus on developing a social studies curriculum that incorporates project based learning and inquiry based center work. The special education liaison focuses on assisting the teachers in developing Behavior Implementation Plans for students and to assist in planning academic challenges aligned to the curriculum and units of design to allow teachers to scaffold and thus meet the needs of students with special needs.
- The school provides many enrichment opportunities through clubs and the arts during and after school. Students are given choice through an interest inventory administered to them. However, during the observation of regular class lessons, not all teachers provide extensions for high performing students during literacy. Consequently, these students miss opportunities to challenge them to higher learning outcomes.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings:

Assessments provide an accurate picture of student mastery, providing meaningful and actionable feedback to teachers, and students regarding student achievement. This enables them to track progress and adjust curricula to meet the needs of all students.

Impact:

The use of aligning purposeful assessments to curricula increases teacher awareness of student need and deepens their understanding of content.

Supporting Evidence

- Monday professional development is dedicated throughout the school to looking at student work using a grade based collaborative protocol, in addition to the following assessments. The teachers analyze the student's latest running records, reading levels, writing samples and math assessments. Using this approach, the teachers then develop an instructional strategy to best meet the needs of the individual student. This was evidenced during the teacher team meeting.
- The implementation of Response to Intervention across the building provides a continuous cycle of assessment, analysis, feedback and targeted instruction within a specified time period, moving students from one tier to the next until the desired outcomes are achieved.
- Students self-assess in a variety of ways. They utilize student facing check lists, peer assessments and student rubrics which enable them to monitor their own understanding and identify their next steps. This was evidenced through classroom observations and bulletin board displays.
- All bulletin boards are purposeful and celebrate student independence. Moreover in addition to having students identify their strengths and next steps, the principal uses it as an assessment tool to determine the accuracy of teacher feedback. All teachers receive a form which indicates comments about the particular piece of work and next steps. This also drives professional development, if needed.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings:

The school communicates to the entire school community-namely, teachers, parents and students high expectations across content areas, holding them accountable for their specific role. In addition, teachers provide clear expectations for achievement through purposeful feedback to students and their parents.

Impact:

Teachers and families have mutual accountability for every student's progress and ultimately their success. There is also an increased awareness of grade level standards for both parent and teacher resulting in a more collaborative teacher/parent conversation.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration has high expectations for the manner in which teachers convey strengths and challenges to parents. One professional activity provides teachers with the activity of simulating mock interviews with parents. The purpose of this is to identify clear concrete next steps to parents so they can be true partners in their child's journey to reach identified goals.
- The P.S. 503 website and Google Drive share all formative and summative assessments with parents so they are aware of their child's progress toward success. The Parent Reporting Tool provides parents with academic expectations for each grade and includes tips and techniques on how to provide support at home.
- The school has a number of activities in place to increase parent involvement around high expectations for their child's performance. There are Family Fun Fridays where students and their parents engage in activities together. In addition the principal has Coffee with the Principal which parents indicated during the parent meeting especially enjoy because they can have honest informal conversations with the principal in a social setting validating the importance of the role they play in their child's education.
- The Promise Center and The Center for Family Life are two community based organizations who have ongoing meetings with families to address social issues which may impact family life and therefore, impact student performance. Families receive counseling providing them with coping skills to minimize the impact on their children.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings:

The school engages all learners in a rigorous, coherent curriculum across all grades, in all subjects aligned to the Common Core State Learning Standards.

Impact:

This results in coherence across the school promoting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and teachers articulate how all curricula, both horizontally and vertically are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Teachers standardized the running record across all grades and in addition retooled the class rubric for each grade by matching it to the English Language Arts standards and Measures of Student Learning. As a result of this strong alignment, there was a 50% decrease in regression among students when assessed from their June scores to now.
- Through an analysis of the school profile, the school created all curricula to challenge English language learners and students with disabilities, providing instruction that scaffolds instruction so students demonstrate their understanding through the work products they create at their level of entry in a co-teaching model in every classroom. This results in rigorous targeted instructional groups.
- The school uses a Balanced Math program using, TERC, Math in the City and Metamorphosis staff development materials providing problem solving habits and conceptual understanding as the students focus on the Standards for Mathematical Practice.
- Universal Design for Learning ensures access for all students to move toward the instructional shifts, enabling them to scaffold their instruction for students at their level of entry.
- The school has the program “Habits of Mind” which enables all students to gain awareness of ethical citizenship in the 21st digital century.