



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Brooklyn Gardens**

**Elementary K557**

**574 Dumont Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11207**

**Principal: Irene Spence**

**Date of review: February 5, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

## The School Context

Brooklyn Gardens is an elementary school with 234 students from Pre-kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 66% Black, 32% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 8% 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 90%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations for teachers through the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders communicate high expectations to families and partner with them in achieving student progress towards those expectations

### Impact

There is mutual accountability among families and staff for student progress fostered through consistent communication and collaborations focused on the academic and personal expectations tied to college and career readiness

### Supporting Evidence

- Parents receive regular communications in the form of calendars newsletters, and progress reports in addition to access to teachers through e-mail. Parents receive information on expectations through curriculum nights. Progress reports not only give information about student progress but include a “how to help at home” section where parents are given a model of what is expected and ideas for reinforcing strategies at home. In addition, the school hosts parents each Tuesday, inviting small groups in to practice strategies for reading with their child. Parents stated that after expressing to a teacher that they were struggling with “new math”, the teacher invited them in for small group work in problem solving to support them in supporting their child.
- The school utilizes monthly Family Fun Nights as more than just parent engagement events. The school recognizes that this is their main opportunity to have parents engage with their child around academic and personal expectations. On a recent movie night, students and their families toured the gym which was filled with museum artifacts and completed a scavenger hunt. During the movie, students and their families had guiding questions and there were points where the movie was stopped so that parents and students could discuss new learning about the artifacts they viewed previously.
- School leaders convey high expectations to staff through the Danielson Framework for teaching. As a new school, teachers and administration work closely together in making school decisions, including those surrounding professional development opportunities. Communication systems include Sprouts, which is a nightly communication from the principal and Seedlings, which is a weekly communication from the assistant that keep staff informed of happenings and expectations. Collaborative structures for looking at student work and curricula and unpacking the Danielson Framework, result in common understandings and a mutual accountability for school and student progress.
- Teachers attended exemplar training and were responsible for turn-keying and implementing usage school-wide. Teachers worked with Carl Anderson and shared conferring strategies with their peers. Integrated Co-Teaching staff attend professional development on co-teaching models and share with the entire staff in order to support the effective utilization of all classroom personnel.
- Brooklyn Gardens applied and was accepted to be a Community School.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers provide multiple entry points in high level tasks, for all learners, which advance student discussions.

### Impact

While these practices provide access to the curricula for learners and result in high levels of student participation, scaffolds and extensions for higher achieving students are not yet strategically implemented and student ownership in lessons is in progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a kindergarten mathematics class, students each created a personal abacus, as a tool to support them in adding single digits to ten. Students were then able to utilize the tools as they worked in small groups through guided problem solving. In all guided groups, students were working on solving the same problem and structures to direct their learning were not in place. So while students were engaged in a rigorous task that addressed different learning styles, there were no extension opportunities that could be provided with increased structure.
- Two grade two classes are exploring how Manhattan has changed over time. While it was clear that the teachers had planned together on the grade, an integrated co-teaching class had students working in small groups with photocopies of the illustrations from one text that they were using to learn about Manhattan's evolution. Students worked with guided support to study details in illustrations to gather information, a second group focused author's language to support their writing and a third group worked on main idea and details for smaller text sections. Student groups were established utilizing formative assessment data that included conference notes. In a second class, the teacher was utilizing the same text to support the exploration of Manhattan over time but was showing the book to a whole class and reading aloud for twenty minutes resulting in student disengagement and focusing on content as opposed to supporting literacy skills through content.
- Students were reading *The Year of Ms. Agnes*. In a current lesson, students were exploring a non-fiction text about the Athabascans to strengthen their content knowledge of Alaskan culture and expand their vocabulary discussing terms such as mukluks. Students were then going to create a story strip to explain what they think will happen in the next chapter. Students had checklists to support their process focusing on the use of text-based evidence to support their thinking.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders ensure an engaging and rigorous curriculum that is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically embed the instructional shifts while promoting college and career readiness for all students.

### Impact

Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize academic and personal behaviors that support college and career readiness and allow all students to demonstrate understanding in multiple ways.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school adopted Ready Gen and Go Math to support the development of a Common Core aligned curricula in English language arts and mathematics. Teacher teams meet three days each summer and once a week to focus on planning. Teachers and administration realized in the first year that these programs would not provide consistent rigor and access to all learners. Teachers use the social studies scope and sequence and blue print for the arts to create an interdisciplinary English language arts curriculum that incorporates project based learning opportunities. Teacher use exemplars to increase students' exposure to real world, multi-level problem solving.
- A kindergarten unit on Native Americans allowed students to dictate, illustrate, write or use a combination of the three to demonstrate understanding throughout unit tasks. Students created their totem poles with accompanying stories to demonstrate the understanding that totem poles were used to tell stories. Students also created dream catchers and explained their purpose. As a culminating project students created non-fiction books with facts about Native Americans and included labels and illustrations.
- The school partners with Partnership for Children. Counselors work with teachers to plan opportunities within the curriculum that support students in developing rigorous habits that include working collaboratively with their peers, expressing themselves verbally, planning, organizing and self-monitoring. Classroom projects consistently include self-monitoring checklists that provide clear expectations and purposefully selected graphic organizers as a plan for students, allowing them to move independently through their work.
- Teachers use a unit plan template to support coherence on and across grade that addresses learning standards as well as the personal and academic behaviors associated with college and career readiness.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### **Findings**

Across grades and classrooms, teachers use common summative and formative assessments, aligned to curricula to provide actionable feedback, measure student progress, adjust curricula and inform instructional decision-making.

### **Impact**

Students and teachers have an increased awareness of goals, progress and next learning steps that enable them to effectively adjust curricula and instruction.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams review mathematics pre and post-unit exams and monitor student progress towards goals. Focusing on high needs students, data showed the most progress was being made with special education students and “holdovers” and the least progress was being made by English language learners and general education students. As a result, teachers made adjustments to increase language supports and visual models as well as increase their attention on planning extension activities for on-level students where skills are applied to real world problems.
- Teacher teams noticed that students were struggling with starting their opinion pieces and making connections across ideas. School-wide, starter and connector stems were implemented to support students in the creation of written pieces. This resulted in increased volume and improved organization and allowed teachers to more clearly see student thinking in work products.
- Teacher teams work in vertical teams to analyze data while looking at expectations across grades to identify instructional gaps and modify units to address those gaps. The findings largely focus on comprehension and expression and so teachers have implemented increased opportunities for multiple means of expression and sharing within unit and lesson plans
- School-wide teachers use and monitor student literacy through Fountas and Pinnell reading inventories. Teachers noticed in the fall that students were struggling with comprehension of complex text on grade level. Teachers modified the schedule to include a daily thirty minute reading block where students receive guided support and independent practice on identified skills and strategies. Teachers have also extended writing opportunities aligned to CCLS as Ready Gen primarily includes short reading responses.
- Teachers use pre and post assessments in Go Math to conduct item analyses and plan for whole group and small group instruction. In addition teachers utilize exemplars to assess skill application.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

**Findings**

All teachers engage in professional collaborations focused on strengthening their instructional capacity and improving student achievement.

**Impact**

Teachers are increasing their knowledge and understanding of content, learning standards and instructional practice, improving alignment and leading to improved student outcomes on unit tasks and benchmark assessments.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers participate in an item analysis of pre and post-tests in mathematics. Teachers always ask, “What’s making it move?” making direct links between student performance and teacher practice. As a result, teachers realized students needed more opportunities to go beyond computation and problem solving, resulting in the adoption of exemplars.
- Teachers visit each other’s classrooms through inter-visitation structures receiving peer feedback in self-identified areas of need, building their own capacity within the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- All teachers have a data buddy and they support each other in the development of assessment practices aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the Instructional Shifts. This is resulting in improved alignment of assessment practices.
- Special education students and hold-overs receiving tiered intervention strategies are making exemplary gains in both English language arts and mathematics as evidence by benchmark assessments.