



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Rafael Hernandez/Langston Hughes School

Elementary School M030

**144-176 East 128th Street
Manhattan
NY 10035**

Principal: Teri Stinson

**Date of review: March 3, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Roxan Marks**

The School Context

Rafael Hernandez/Langston Hughes is an elementary school with 296 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 48% Black, 47% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 89.0%

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 | 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 | 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 | Proficient |
| 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 | 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 | Additional Findings | Proficient |

Area of Celebration

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders constantly communicate high expectations to all staff. Teacher teams and staff consistently communicate high expectations for all students offering guidance and feedback.

Impact

The well-established system of accountability in the school ensures that staff provides guidance and feedback to all students which prepares them for the next level of education towards meeting college and career goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Daily announcements provide staff updates and students are greeted during lineup with reminders and the message “good is not good enough; better is possible”. Photographs of Student of Month along with narrative, staff stated, “make children feel proud and valued in the community”. The Teacher and Staff Handbook includes the mission statement, homework policy, lesson planning guidance, family support and other key areas. Teachers are celebrated and recognized during morning announcement for their contribution to the school and receive a certificate for sharing information with other staff members during professional learning time. Clear expectations are messaged to staff regarding implementation of professional learning and it is expected that elements of strategies and techniques shared at professional development sessions are seen in classrooms. Frequent cycles of observations and feedback are conducted highlighting things done well and areas to work on to improve student learning.
- The Professional Learning Committee (PLC) creates a draft plan for the beginning of the school year using the information from the previous year’s Advance data. School leaders and PLC team ensure that the current year observation data is analyzed and that the plan reflects any new areas for which teachers require additional development. Teachers shared that the professional development on close reading strategies was meaningful as they now apply those strategies to mathematics. The coach visits and supports teachers with deeper understanding of the Danielson expectations. Text complexity, writing from sources and citing evidence are some areas that teachers cited they engaged in deep learning with colleagues.
- Three guidance counselors support the students with transition plans to the next grade level. The fifth grade counselor assists with the middle school application process. For those students who are transitioning into the school, the Self-Esteem club operates during lunchtime to provide assistance in acclimating to the new environment. The school leader remarked that everyone gets involved with the life of the school.
- During the parent meeting it was shared that, at the beginning of the year, the school provides clear expectations regarding the academic program and information regarding Common Core Learning Standards. Family Night also bolsters parents’ understanding of literacy and ways to support their children. Parent workshop series entitled “Bridging the Gap” exposes parents to a variety of topics including reading at home, getting prepared for the next grade, curriculum and summer opportunities and activities to participate in with children.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflected alignment to a set of beliefs and to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In most classrooms, discussion reflects high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

In most classrooms instructional strategies allowed student talk in ways that engaged others; however student ownership of their learning and high quality extensions are not yet embedded across all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- School beliefs are aligned to the Danielson Framework and evidence was uniformly seen across classrooms visited. Signs posted on doors show what the learning will be for the day, including learning objectives, flexible groupings, and accountable talk stems. Student work and data binders were apparent in classes. Teachers shared that they meet students at their developmental level and find ways to provide entry into learning. For example, in a grade 4 lesson on fractions, students were creating visual models to represent equivalent fractions. Teachers also stated that children are respected and cared for in the school. Teachers post clear learning objectives so that students know what is expected daily in classes. This was evident across classrooms and teachers were clear in communicating this at the beginning of lessons observed. In a grade 5 classroom, students were locating evidence in text to support answers. Students annotated text, highlighted sections and discussed questions in groups. One student responding to his peers asked students to provide an example to support his claim. As they engaged in discourse, students used stems such as, "I'd like to build on that," and "Can you tell me more?"
- A focus of professional learning is accountable talk and stems were used to scaffold students as they became familiar with the language and process of engaging in collaborative discourse. Across classrooms, students engaged in hearty discussions in groups. For example, in a grade 2 classroom students were involved in a unit on westward expansion on how the pony express was used by pioneers to communicate. Students were in groups, one group was using iPad to read about the pony express while another used texts. During the share portion, students added to other student responses and used accountable talk stems such as, "I'd like to add to that and I disagree". However, student ownership of learning is not fully embedded across classrooms allowing for students to be independent researchers involved in inquiry projects.
- In most classrooms visited the instructional shifts were evident as teachers implemented lessons that required students to cite text based evidence, use non-fiction resources and academic vocabulary, develop fluency and deep understanding of mathematics. In a grade 4 lesson, students were investigating how trade fostered interdependency amongst the craftspeople in the colonial era. Close reading of text and making inferences based on information gathered allowed students to respond on three adapted graphic organizers that were modified for the different functioning levels of students.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using students' work and data from state and formative assessments.

Impact

The integration of instructional shifts into curriculum results in the creation of tasks that are cognitively engaging, promote college and career readiness and provide access for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in the lower grades use EngageNY and upper grades use Expeditionary Learning as the foundations for their English language arts program. Go Math is used school-wide with the addition of constructive responses. Foundations and Wilson provide support for reading, and the state social studies and science standards along with scope and sequence drive content area instruction.
- The results on the state assessments are used by teachers to inform curriculum maps. During the end of the year teachers revisit maps and state item analysis, select key standards, and develop pacing calendars. Teachers ensure that entry points and access are embedded to allow students to develop deep understanding of content. In most lesson plans, the introduction to new vocabulary is connected to students' experiences and prior knowledge. For example in a reading lesson using the text *Impressions*, the lesson provides clarification of the key words and phrases including complex terms for students.
- A review of unit plans shows that priority standards are identified, learning outcomes provide the focus points of units, and the understandings that students are expected to develop and master. Vocabulary is targeted to a manageable list of words that students will learn as well as mini-lessons, resources, guided practice and tiered tasks that allow for differentiation. Some unit plans also included higher order questions and assessments.
- Teacher teams plan and adjust tasks using students' work and data and create tier group activities based on this data. The school created "Reteach Mondays" to provide for targeted lessons for those students that did not master the lesson outcome for the week. During this period, teachers write a lesson plan for the specific skills. An example of a reteach on decomposing numbers provides addition practice using manipulatives and problem solving. The plan shows the standards addressed, active engagement, teach and talk, practice and an assessment.

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| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessment data and rubrics to monitor student progress. Teachers use data to plan tiered activities, create re-teaching lessons and adjust units and lessons.

Impact

The use of common assessments aligned to common core learning standards offers information for teachers who use that information to adjust curricula and inform student groups resulting in improved student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders create an assessment calendar which outlines the assessments by grades, administration dates and timeline for submission of results. The school collects and analyzes a variety of data including reading benchmarks, and unit assessments in reading and mathematics. An example of the unit assessment analysis for module 2a of Expeditionary Learning shows the names of students, mid-unit and end unit percentile scores and an analysis column that teachers write next steps for individual students. Re-teaching lessons and modifications occur for those students who have not mastered specific items on assessments.
- New York State assessment data provides the basis for action plans. Teachers use this information to focus on key standards and provide strategies for students. Teachers supplement the Go Math assessments by creating constructive responses to mirror those students will experience on state assessments. Diagnostic Writing Assessments and Diagnostic Reading Assessments are administered three times a year and analysis also informs next steps in lesson and units.
- Teachers use rubrics aligned to a task to provide meaningful feedback to students to guide their next steps in improving their work. Work products displayed on bulletin boards showed a variety of rubrics. In a grade 4 classroom the teacher uses a conference schedule to ensure that all students are provided with feedback. The “Student Feedback Form” is used across classes and gives feedback to students during conferences. Feedback states at least three things the student did well and areas that they need to work on. Teachers and students sign the form and agree to work on identified areas. A common template is used across the school to collect conference notes; it documents the date, diagnosis, prescription and next steps. Students shared that they get feedback from teachers often and also at the end of the day.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured collaborations to support implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and continually analyze assessment data and student work products. Distributive leadership structures are apparent through teams.

Impact

Through participation in teams, teachers' instructional capacity has strengthened and they have an influence and voice in school decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader shared that teachers meet together twice a week and they have developed a four week cycle for their professional learning. Teams analyze data and develop action plans for individual students in order to improve student outcomes. The principal shared that teachers hold each other accountable and ownership of the work rests on the entire team. Teachers shared that they look at student work against the standards in order to assess the level and decide on next steps. They indicated that they share among the team and reflect on their own practice.
- During the teacher team observation, teachers used a protocol for looking at student work. There were three levels of work samples being reviewed and teachers took ten minutes to read and jot notes on their graphic organizer. The three column charts contained current students' thinking, desired thinking and gaps and implications for planning and preparation.
- Teachers document their work on a school based meeting template which includes a section for teachers to sign and the meeting topic, areas discussed and outcomes. Teachers stated that team work has strengthened their capacity and new teachers appreciated the support received by collaborating with peers and learning from experienced educators. Teachers participate in inter-visitations and use a "critical friends' protocol" to document their interactions by highlighting warm and cool feedback. Teachers have a voice in planning parent engagement activities and providing professional learning opportunities for other members of staff. For example, a pre-kindergarten teacher knew the Foundations program well and she conducted the workshop for staff members. Teachers are tapped for their specific talent and encouraged to lead activities.