



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Robert Simon School

Elementary School M064

**600 East 6th Street
Manhattan
NY 10009**

Principal: Marlon L. Hosang

**Date of review: February 24, 2015
Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

The Robert Simon School is an elementary school with 282 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 18% Black, 66% Hispanic, 7% White, 7% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 32% special education students. Boys account for 57% of the students enrolled and girls account for 43%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.5%.

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	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	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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in teacher-led structured team collaborations. Staff members have opportunities for distributive leadership and input into the instructional decisions of the school.

Impact

Teacher teams' collaborations result in school-wide instructional coherence, increased student achievement and strengthened teacher instructional capacity. An embedded distributed leadership structure ensures that teachers play a central role in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet regularly in teacher teams to analyze and improve student learning and teacher practice. For example, teachers meet weekly in grade or content teams, and once a month in their Success For All (SFA) curriculum and solutions committees. Teachers also meet quarterly to report progress and student achievement towards goals. During an observation of the grade 5 content team, teachers looked at students' science work products and identified struggling students using a guide for close reading continuum. Teachers shared instructional recommendations, such as modeling the use of vocabulary in units, and increasing the use of differentiated graphic organizers to assist students with organization.
- Teacher teams' work is visible to school leaders and teachers on Google Docs. Teachers support one another by providing feedback online and during teacher teams. One of the documents developed and refined by teachers is the guide for close reading continuum used throughout the school. Teachers have embraced this practice as it brings coherence throughout the grades and subject areas. Moreover, student work analysis demonstrates that students are thinking more deeply, writing more and engaging in richer texts as a result of the school wide adoption of close reading.
- Teachers have varied opportunities for leadership and decision making at the school. Teachers rotate their roles in teacher teams, and as coaches, provide professional development for their colleagues. In addition, teachers helped to bring Success For All to the school to provide literacy supports to students. The grade 2 teachers modified their curriculum when data analysis demonstrated that some students struggled with Ready Gen, leading teachers to incorporate Foundations to support the students who were struggling with reading comprehension. Teachers also support one another by teaming in the classrooms to build capacity and share instructional practices.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are engaging, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned using student work and data.

Impact

Curricular coherence promotes college and career readiness for all students. Although most curricula and academic tasks emphasize cognitive engagement, there are a few missed opportunities in offering access to individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans demonstrate the use of close reading and cooperative learning to support students as well as to foster peer-peer collaboration. Teachers' plans include practices and processes that include an emphasis on higher-order questioning to help students access complex texts.
- The school designates Fridays for project-based learning, and students have the opportunity to choose and research topics of interest. A focus of the grade 2 lessons this year was communities. Lesson plans indicate that teachers took the students to the Museum of the City of New York to learn about urban planning, and tasks included having students create maps of the classroom, the school, and the neighborhood. Additionally, grade 5 lessons indicated that students participated in the Little Rock pilot program geared for middle and high school students. Curricula maps indicate that all students participate in annual project-based content fairs.
- Teachers and school leaders use student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks. Based on student data analysis, the school adopted the practice of close reading school-wide. The grade 2 teachers modified their curriculum and incorporated Ready Gen resources and Foundations to strengthen literacy skills for students to meet their individualized needs. Teachers modified curricula, such as the Success For All (SFA) curriculum, and integrated content Fridays to promote literacy in the subject areas.
- Although there is a high level of rigor in the curricula, access for all learners was limited in a few lesson plans. For example, in a science plan, small group, data collection, and adult support were strategies listed as differentiation.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices are rooted in an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Tasks and teaching strategies provide multiple entry points and supports.

Impact

Coherence in teaching practices aligned to the Danielson framework for teaching ensures that students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted the practices of close reading, small group instruction, and cooperative learning, which were evident across classrooms. To promote small group instruction, some classrooms had as many as four adults supporting student learning. For example, in a grade 2 class, there were two teachers, the literacy coach, and another adult each working with a small group that was engaged in a character study.
- Students were engaged in high level tasks in which there was an opportunity for choice. In one of the classrooms, there were English language learners reading and discussing Abraham Lincoln. Together, they analyzed the text, and posed and responded to questions about the reading. There was also a group of students working individually in the class. When asked about their work, one said that he chose to read and answer questions about BMX bikes from a graphic novel, and another chose to read about basketball. Although the texts were complex, they accessed the information through prior knowledge and interests.
- Teaching strategies consistently provided multiple entry points into the curricula. Activities allowed students to work in groups. For example, in a Success For All class of grade 3 and grade 4 students, all learners worked in groups with role cards to ensure engagement and accountability for the work. In another class, students also worked in groups to identify rock types by analyzing the characteristics of rocks and classifying them during a hands-on activity. Across classrooms, students used close reading bookmarks, graphic organizers, and had visuals to support their learning. They also worked in small groups with an adult who probed and pushed their thinking.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self and peer assessment.

Impact

The analysis of the common assessments, student self and peer assessments ensures that teachers effectively adjust instruction and the curricula to meet the needs of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use different ways to assess students' progress. In an English as a second language (ESL) grade 2 math class, students worked and assessed their progress on their laptops. In a grade 1 Success For All class, students assessed their fluency by using a rubric with the teacher assistance. In a grade 5 math class, the teacher circulated around the room and encouraged students to support one another. The teacher asked a pair of students, "Did he help you? What did he tell you? Show me the numbers he explained to you in the story".
- Across classrooms, students engage in self- or peer-assessment. Teachers use checklists, questions, and self-assessment tools in order for students to evaluate their own work and the collective work of their group. For example, during a SFA lesson, students worked in groups, with each student assuming a specific role (to read the question, answer the question, agree or disagree with the answer or summarize). Students held each other accountable for their part of the work as the groups completed the task.
- Teachers use common assessments to make decisions around effective instructional adjustments. The school uses end of unit tests, Early Childhood Assessments in Mathematics (ECAM), Running Records (RR), Success For All assessments, math and English language arts simulations to determine trends across and within grades and to make instructional adjustments. The analysis of these assessments demonstrated a need to strengthen students' reading comprehension, which resulted in bringing Success For All and close reading to the school. Teachers use Running Records to determine student progress towards literacy goals, Success For All, and guided reading groups.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff have established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all. Structures and systems provide support and feedback to teachers and families to meet and understand these expectations.

Impact

The development of a culture for learning has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability for expectations, and successful partnerships with families to support student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration communicates high expectations to staff through the development of school goals, structures for collaboration and professional development. To support the school's foci, teachers receive professional development in close reading and cooperative learning. Teachers are encouraged to attend professional development outside of the school, purchase professional books for their own professional growth, and to facilitate professional development for their colleagues.
- The support given to teachers enables them to participate in and foster a culture of mutual accountability at the school. Teachers support one another in the classroom and share all group work with the staff through Google Docs. Accordingly, teachers feel supported with meeting the school's high expectations for professional responsibility. Teachers stated that they receive support from school leaders, who regularly observe their work. Additionally, school leaders and teachers provide feedback to colleagues during inquiry work. A teacher shared that she plans to use close reading strategies with a video as the text because she has observed a colleague using the strategy effectively.
- Parents stated that school leaders and the teachers having an open door policy, which enables parents to be partners in supporting students' academic progress. They communicate with the school through phone calls, email, weekly updates from the principal, meeting times with teachers, progress reports, during workshops and other events among others. They also spoke about a communication system called Class Dojo used by teachers to alert parents on about their child's progress during the day.