

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

William Sherman

Elementary School M087

**160 West 78 Street
Manhattan
NY 10024**

Principal: Monica Berry

**Date of review: May 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

The School Context

William Sherman is an elementary school with 876 students from grade Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 5% Black, 14% Hispanic, 66% White, 8% multi-racial and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 8% 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 96.0%.

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	Celebration	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	Focus	Developing
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	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

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school curricula offers student's opportunities to engage in rigorous academic tasks that produce meaningful work products aligned to Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

The instructional shifts are embedded into the curricular resulting in coherence across grades and subjects. Students are provided with opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking skills and produce interdisciplinary projects that display their content understandings.

Supporting Evidence

- The school revised their English Language Arts curriculum units to ensure Common Core Learning Standards alignment. The teachers, with the support of staff developers, created curriculum units throughout the grades that integrate literacy and content instruction.
- All units include a yearlong theme, enduring understandings, essential questions, and assessments. The curriculum engages students in project-based tasks that are interdisciplinary and incorporate real life experiences and related trips. These include kindergarten students creating a restaurant, second graders developing New York City landmark guides and fifth graders designing an apartment.
- In literacy, the school implements and balanced a literacy model with Teachers' College Reading and Writing Units. The writing units cover a variety of genres and mentor texts are used to support the writing process. The curriculum includes vocabulary development and the reading of complex texts. Tasks include writing from sources where students are asked to support their claims with evidence. Children read a variety of books on the independent level and are supported through independent practice and guided reading.
- The math program was changed from Everyday Math to Envisions to support the instructional shifts. The school utilizes performance tasks created by the Department of Education and Context for Learning. In addition, the math curriculum is supplemented with word problems from Engage NY and other research based sites to support students in attaining efficiency in multi-step problems and real world application. Second grade teachers also use tasks from Math in the City.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although the school utilizes a wide range of assessments to track students' progress, all teachers are not consistently using data to make needed changes to the curriculum, student groupings and their instructional practices.

Impact

Teachers are limited in gauging student learning outcomes and the effectiveness of their curricula and instructional practice. Thus far, the approach is to identify the needs of individual students based on assessments. However, the school is not consistently using the data to make needed changes in the curriculum, student groupings and teaching practices including questioning and providing effective feedback with next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers create project based inquiry assessments that allow them to evaluate students' progress through learning as well as see how the students are able to apply knowledge they acquired throughout the unit. However, there are no school wide systems in place to collect and monitor this data. Students also engage in peer assessments and self-reflections.
- The use of rubrics and checklists is not evident in most classrooms and is not attached to student work. There is little actionable feedback provided to students in terms of clear next academic steps. Most teachers did not take notes or use checklists to assess student learning during classroom visits.
- Data is inconsistently used to adjust daily lessons and instruction for sub groups including higher level students. While in some classes, teachers effectively used ongoing assessment practices to check for understanding and make necessary adjustments, most classes were typified by irregular "spur of the moment" assessments that did not allow the teacher to effectively make adjustments to meet their needs of students.
- The school assesses students reading levels twice a year using Fountas and Pinnell. At the end of each unit, students are given an 'on demand' writing task from the bundles which they modified.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers' practices are aligned with Common Core curricula and exemplify a common articulated belief in engaging students in cognitively challenging and interdisciplinary tasks. Teachers facilitate learning as students are involved in investigations utilizing an inquiry approach to learning. However, there is little differentiation or supports for high level students or subgroups.

Impact

Instructional practices promote high levels of student thinking across content areas. However, the development of high quality supports and extensions into the curricula is still a work in progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and follow a workshop model. Students work in groups on interdisciplinary projects and take many trips related to the unit of study. However, tasks offered are not always differentiated to provide students with multiple entry points.
- In some classrooms, there was evidence of students in discussion working on higher order tasks. This was particularly noted in the 5th grade instructional co-teaching math lesson entitled Apartment Design. Students drafted and brainstormed their design for a four-bedroom apartment, totaling 1000 square feet. They had to decide on wall measurements, and the square footage of each individual room. They scaled their design onto graph paper. They worked with partners and shared their strategies.
- While most classes are guided by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and a coherent belief around quality instruction, not all classes were marked by high-level questioning and deep student discussion.
- In the third grade class, groups of students presented their posters on Chinese cultures. When asked about their presentations, students said that they got their information from a few books and did not use online resources in class to research the topic. The teacher did grade each presentation but did not use a rubric or checklist to assess the students in the audience and asked limited low level questions that were primarily recall of facts. Students were not engaged in assessing the presentations. The presentations all followed the same format with little differentiation.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently messaged to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in trainings and other modes of communications. Workshops and progress reports keep families apprised of student achievement toward college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the schools high expectations build systems of accountability for student academic, social and emotional behavior. Staff and school leaders offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has one-on-one discussions with the teachers to give feedback and set clear expectations aligned to the Danielson framework. The current focus on teacher pedagogy is on improving questioning and discussion and intellectual engagement. Although the school does not have a staff handbook, the principal gives out department of education regulations and guidelines.
- Parents who did convey that the school has high expectations for their children. Parents also said that they have a voice in school decisions and are informed of their child's progress through informal conversations and or planned meetings. Although the school does not provide progress reports, some teachers give out newsletters updating parents on the current units of study and events but this is not a school wide practice. Parents are invited to events such as publishing parties and Friday Math Games.
- Student voice is encouraged and many college and career readiness skills are taught through the interdisciplinary units where students take ownership for their learning. Students are involved in negotiating, how to politely disagree, compromise, collaborate and make choices. They talk about why they are learning what they are learning and its connection to the real world. The school does not believe in award ceremonies highlighting selected students for academic success since they believe all their children are worthy.

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

The majority of teacher teams work collaboratively to analyze classroom practice, assessment data and curricular products for the purpose of making informed adjustments to improve teacher pedagogy and student achievement.

Impact

Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning. Curriculum is aligned to common core learning standards and the instructional shifts are now embedded in daily lessons.

Supporting Evidence

- The teachers attend a grade meeting once a month. The agenda is based on whatever the priority is for that month. Topics include: discussing Comprehensive Educational Plan goals, revamping the mission, planning a unit of study or writing a performance task.
- Teachers articulated that they felt empowered to make curriculum revisions and had input toward the development of instructional resources across grades. For example, the first grade team reviewed the Math Envision program and changed the order of units to build a better foundation for the students. The 2nd grade team met to discuss and change the culminating project of their New York City unit.
- The 3rd grade teachers engage in a Community Service Team Meeting. They are currently organizing and donating school supplies to other schools. They are also discussing ways students can take an active role in this as part of the magnet theme and learn to take care of the world around them. This supports the school goal of promoting college and career readiness skills.
- The teacher team looked at student work that was presented by one teacher. The team gave her suggestions to implement and support the student based on the data. Although there are no formal agendas or protocols that are consistently followed, the principal does receive an email with notes describing the purpose and results of the meeting.