



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Spectrum School

Elementary-Middle-High M094

**55 Battery Park Place
New York
NY 10280**

Principal: Ronnie Shuster

**Date of review: May 13-14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

The School Context

The Spectrum School is an elementary, middle, high school with 357 students from grade kindergarten through grade 9. The school population comprises 31% Black, 44% Hispanic, 16% White, 2% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 79% of the students enrolled and girls account for 21%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 87.4%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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

Teachers collaborate to examine student work, plan together and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practices, and make key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

Teacher team work had led to improved pedagogy and student mastery of goals. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes an integrated model of related service. Teachers and related service providers meet twice per month to work together to plan meaningful lessons to target individual student needs. This was observed at a Related Service Provider (RSP) Collaborative Team meeting where teachers were planning the June English Language Arts (ELA) unit of study and offering how they can condense the four week unit into three weeks given the shortened number of school days in June. Teachers examined key points to be taught and the related service providers aligned their services to the unit theme and offered suggestions as well.
- Each site has an arts inquiry team that includes the arts teachers from the site which establishes coherence across the sites. The team assesses and validates the work in the arts and its correlation to academic success and achieving Individual Educational Plan (IEP) goals. Each teacher focuses on 12 students selected from groups that they work with. To encourage more ownership of the project, there were no predetermined criteria for their selections. At the meeting observed, the arts coach shared how the team used the components from student's IEP goals and used their baseline assessment to monitor their monthly progress based on the arts strategies they created. One teacher shared how she created a scale using the numbers "0-4" with "0" for not having an initial goal to "4" for goal mastery and used this scale to chart results. Teachers shared how the largest gains were in speech and socio-emotional goals.
- Teachers are encouraged to partake in several committees where they have a voice. The Teacher Steering Committee created a monthly survey which is developed by model teachers to identify school-wide issues/concerns related to all areas of the school environment and instruction. Feedback is provided monthly in the staff memo and used to make changes to instruction, assessments, and behavior interventions. The PBIS Committee meets monthly to review student behavior data and develop behavior intervention and delivery of social skill intervention. Because teachers recommended more time to plan, the teacher team schedule was revised to reflect two meetings a month for curriculum planning and two meetings a month for related service collaboration. Meeting notes and responses are posted on Google Drive. In the Journal Club, staff is researching instructional strategies that support instruction across classrooms. These strategies are tested, shared and implemented if successful. The Rubric Committee is refining the developmental continuum and creating unit-specific checklists to be used by staff and students to help drive more meaningful instruction. Every staff member participates in reflection sessions following teaching artist residencies which directly impact future planning, professional development and arts programming.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Even though the school leaders and faculty have an ongoing understanding of the academic performance and progress of students through use of relevant data, the same emphasis is not expressed for students' behavioral progress.

Impact

A complete picture of students' progress across all aspects of the school is not extended to data gathering and analysis practices of student occurrences and incidences. Meaningful feedback to students is inconsistent across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams have sufficient data to identify students' strengths and needs. In addition, the rubric template provides space for teacher feedback. However, teacher feedback on student work varies throughout the school. Some teachers either do not provide positive feedback, some do not provide next steps and some provided no feedback at all.
- The school uses multiple assessments aligned to curricula to inform teacher planning and make adjustments based on student outcomes. The following assessments are utilized: Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI)- students are assessed using SANDI, an assessment that is aligned to CCLS. SANDI is used in the development and progress monitoring of IEP goals. Running_Records- (Reading A-Z) is used for students who can access AA level books. The Writing_Continuum- (Based on the Developmental Writing Continuum) was introduced as a way to monitor student progress in the mechanics of writing and expressive communication development. Teachers are able to assess student development using a consistent tool across content areas and grade levels. The school also uses a School-based Arts Assessment where arts teachers collaborated to create various data trackers to correlate the impact of the arts on academic success related to IEP goals. Student progress in social emotional, English Language Arts (ELA) and occupational and physical therapy goals are tracked through the arts. This was made evident by monthly updates and an increase towards mastery based on an independence scale of 1 to 4. In addition, in the STAARS program, administration tracked four students' progress in four skills categories related to arts from October to March: dance, music, theatre, and social emotional skills. Progress was measured by the use of percentage scale starting with 25% and ending at 100% to show mastery.
- In response to the previous Quality Review, the data team, which is the assistant principal, Inclusion classroom teacher and the technology teacher, created a Data Tracker that lives in Google Drive. Also, they updated the online portfolio system to include the various data and assessments, and generates the school's academic data and growth. Teacher teams get their specific data, analyze it and create strategies in the classroom. During cabinet meetings, administration looks at the data and monitors the academic progress. This practice is not consistent with student behavioral data, especially given the school's identification by the State as being "*A Persistently Dangerous School*" and, therefore, the lack of progress monitoring in this area hinders student accountability and progress.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricular decisions assist in building coherence and promote career and college readiness, yet not planned and refined to the extent of providing access to all individual and groups of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage collaboratively in teams and the school reflects on the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and work to align the curriculum appropriately. However, teachers do not always strategically plan academic tasks for the middle school students to engage them and challenge their thinking which hinders the academic growth of some groups of students.
- English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum maps come from the District 75 pacing calendar. Pacing calendars show the priority skills on which each grade is to focus based on the CCLS. It is the principal's expectations for teachers to examine whether there are any gaps in the pacing calendar for any adjustments. However, the District 75 pacing calendar is used verbatim and there was no evidence of teachers using the CCLS at the meeting observed. Teachers stated that all of the standards were covered, but could not say how they knew, with the exception that it was written.
- Teachers administered a student interest inventory at the beginning of the year as one method to plan multiple entry points in the curricula to accommodate students with disabilities at varying cognitive abilities. After analyzing student work and data at the end of each unit, teachers are expected to make revisions to the units of instruction. However, the evidence of teachers in the middle school for students to have access to cognitively engaging tasks varies across classrooms, and therefore, the individual learning needs of some groups of students are not always consistently targeted.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and the school's coherent belief system of how students with disabilities learn best. In turn, teaching practices reflect targeted instruction and supports so that learners are engaged in tasks.

Impact

Across classrooms, most learners can demonstrate higher-order thinking in student work.

Supporting Evidence

- As the result of administration reading "*An Extraordinary School*", which highlighted a particular program that a special education school was implementing in Australia, the school has instituted an integrated model of related service delivery provided three times a week. Related service providers deliver related service mandates using a push-in model to support students' ability to receive instruction. This collaboration supports teaching practices by providing multiple entry points, therapeutic supports, and related service-based instructional extensions. Input and collaboration by the related service providers ensures that all students are engaged and that their individual needs are met. This was evident in an 8:1:1 grade 3 class writing class where as the classroom teacher was discussing writing memoir, the physical therapist was working with some students in a jumping activity using the sequencing of their life events to help them with their writing.
- An analysis of observation data from the 2013-2014 school year revealed a great deal of teacher- directed instruction. To ensure increased student participation and engagement the school developed its instructional focus around the implementation of the workshop model across content areas. The workshop model has led to more effective and rigorous instruction that incorporates whole group, small group and independent work. The model allows for increased opportunities for student discussion and peer-to-peer collaboration. In addition, teachers have adapted the model to include time for IEP-directed activities at the end of every instructional period. Classroom settings reflect careful thought regarding the individual needs of students, creating a consistent instructional focus school-wide, as evidence in a high school 12:1:1 classroom where the teacher first modeled to the students how to use percentages and/or a pie chart to interpret probability and afterwards, assigned independent activities based on their cognitive abilities (some had word problems to solve and some had picture graphs).
- The school has been utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching for the past two years. Teacher pedagogy has improved through frequent observations, targeted feedback, inter-visitations and assistance to teachers in need. Additionally, twice per month teacher team meeting sessions focus on unpacking the comprehensive approach to balanced literacy and exploring instructional strategies of the workshop model. Instructional coaches lead teacher cohorts in a review of the Danielson rubric for a self-evaluative discussion of their own lessons and teaching practices. Teachers examine Danielson elements in which they need support, then provide peer-coaching to help one another with constructive critique, ideas and examples of best practices. In a 6:1:1 class where students were understanding and identifying shapes, students in the ELL group were sorting blocks of triangles and rectangles in order for them to have tactile evidence of the difference between the two shapes, while the rest of the class were sorting real pictures of triangles and rectangles.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Parents are key partners in their child's education connected to a path for college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations build buy-in and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, thus providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents are informed of the school's high expectations in various ways. Monthly "Coffee with the Cabinet" events provide a forum for parents to read, talk and actively engage in the school's decision making process. Monthly site parent events are promoted, scheduled and tracked. Monthly classroom publishing parties and/or culminating activities allow parents to participate and be active members of the learning community. The school provides Individual Educational Plan (IEP) driven parent trainings that are scheduled by related service providers and the parent coordinator. Each site hosts and promotes 2-5 site-wide family events throughout the year, such as a performances, open rehearsals, design showcases, art shows, and student awards ceremonies. Finally, there is a Parent Newsletter which is distributed monthly and shares school news and updates. These structures present a consistent message to families on high expectations and their role in assisting their children to advance.
- Administration has scheduled teacher team meetings for professional development once per month. During this time, administration and specialists meet with teachers to review the school's instructional focus, the Strategic Plan, as well as the school goals and expectations to see if it is aligned with the 2014-2015 Citywide Instructional Expectations, the Chancellor's *Four Pillars* and *The Framework for Great Schools*. In turn, teachers understand the direction and are working together in an effort to boost school performance.
- After the school developed their instructional focus and School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP) goals, administration wanted to ensure that they were communicated clearly, distributed and available. The creation of "The Spectrum School Strategic Plan 2014-2015" flow chart was developed following a conversation with staff members who were confused by the connections between the SCEP, instructional focus, Chancellor's Capacity Framework and the Citywide Instructional Expectations. Included in the flow chart is the school's vision and mission statement. Administration wanted the staff to have an easy visual of the school's goals and objectives for the year and how they were aligned to all initiatives of the school and the Chancellor's initiatives. Coaches strategically offered modeling in various areas of need and support. The 6 week summer institute targets skills and strategies that support new and struggling teachers to help improve student learning. The school normed observations to help target areas of greatest need for teachers. Through newsletters administrators communicated school-wide expectations, goals and instructional focus for the school. Teachers are held accountable for improving their pedagogy and student learning by maintaining on line and hard copy student portfolios. The portfolios require teachers to monitor student progress and that data is used to drive further instruction. Teachers are also responsible to conduct monthly Individual Educational Plans (IEP) progress monitoring.