

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 124 Yung Wing

Elementary School M124

**40 Division Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Alice Hom

**Dates of review: March 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Grossman**

The School Context

P.S. 124 Yung Wing is an elementary school with 864 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 3% Hispanic, 2% White, and 94% Asian students. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 97.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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	Well Developed
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.	Celebration	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.	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

3.4 High Expectations

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school has a pervasive focus on "growth mindset" and academic achievement for all members of the community including students, teachers and parents.

Impact

There is consistency and a common language around achievement and progress that enables all stakeholders to focus on current goals and needs, as well as long-term goals such as college.

Supporting Evidence

- The school began this year by engaging staff in a study around the concept of "growth mindset." This work has had a powerful positive effect on teachers, both in terms of their own growth as well as improving their understanding of their students' growth, and has helped the school community to shift and raise their expectations not only of the students but also of one another as colleagues. Teachers reported that this work has not only had a strong impact on the way they communicate with students and parents about their work, but it has also directly strengthened their own practice. For example, one teacher shared how school leadership asked him to do a presentation for the rest of the faculty at a professional development session. Initially he was concerned about both presenting as well as his colleagues' reaction to his selection. However, he relied on the information he learned from the growth mindset work in planning his own presentation and it was very successful. He characterized the experience as having his own "productive struggle." This made him see the full-blown benefits of utilizing growth mindset thinking, which he is now fully integrating into the way he operates his classroom.
- Students as well are speaking the language of growth. Throughout multiple classrooms, students made statements such as "I didn't get it this time but I will try it again," in reference to solving math problems. Students shared their written work that demonstrated the numerous drafts that included commentary from their classmates on how to improve. The students shared their goals for the next level of their education, linking their work now, in grade 4 or 5, to a successful experience in middle school and beyond.
- Parents were effusive in their praise for the growth mindset work and for all the work done over the last several years that has transformed the way they understand learning and college readiness. In addition to several workshops and a monthly column about growth mindset in the parent newsletter, they particularly appreciated the way they have been "re-trained" to think about the skills and knowledge their children need to acquire for a 21st century college education. Some of the skills include the ability to think critically, argue an issue from multiple perspectives, and work collaboratively with others. One parent spoke for the group when she shared that for the parents in this community, it has been a "huge shift" to think about growth rather than to think about straight achievement, and that her child's generation will have a "whole different understanding of how to compete" than her generation had.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

There are some burgeoning practices in assessment that are starting to have positive impact, but there is inconsistency in terms of quality and use of varying forms of assessment.

Impact

Due to inconsistent use and application of assessment practices, some students are not benefiting as much as they could from practices such as self-assessment, student reflection, and high quality feedback from their teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- While the school has been developing rubrics, they frequently contain language that is not student or parent friendly. Teachers across the school do not yet have a clear understanding of the purpose of a rubric, or their use to support individual student learning. Sometimes when a rubric is used, teachers provide limited additional feedback, simply circling the category on the rubric rather than providing detailed actionable feedback to students.
- Several students shared written work they had completed. They all reported having a rubric, but in several cases, they shared that they received the rubric after the completion of the assignment, and they shared that there was limited discussion about the rubric when used, whether before or after the assignment.
- Although several effective student self-assessment practices, such as reflective writing, peer assessment or checklists are beginning, teachers' use of on-the-spot assessment and ongoing checks for understanding was inconsistent. School leadership recognizes this and is actively working, through the vertical team and other professional development, to strengthen this area, understanding that it also correlates with the school's commitment of having a growth mindset.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school implements rigorous curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that are focused on meeting the needs of all students. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school's rigorous, Common Core aligned curricula enable all students, particularly the school's very large English language learner (ELL) population, to interact and grow intellectually with rich material in a wide variety of ways that lead to their cognitive engagement and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Reviewed curriculum documents and lesson plans clearly reflected the extensive work that the school has done to both align to rigorous standards, as well as to make provisions and revisions that support all students. Many opportunities exist for students to write extensively, craft arguments, read complex text and develop literacy through social studies and science. Curriculum documents show a clear integration of these subjects. Math is especially strong and reflects a significant movement away from traditional formula based problem solving to deep critical thinking in which students are analyzing and internalizing concepts.
- Upper grade teachers have been implementing "genius hour" in their classrooms, when they dedicate time for students to engage in highly individualized, self-directed research on topics of choice. The teachers provide students with tools and techniques that enhance their research, including how to examine sources critically and how to take notes, share ideas, and organize information. Students produce projects, ranging from PowerPoint presentations to works of art, which illustrate their chosen topics, typically anchored in the current unit of study in social studies or science.
- There were many examples where teachers or tasks challenged students to show their thinking. In an early childhood classroom, students were reflecting on what they had learned about subtraction. Their class chart indicated they had not only learned the basic algorithm, but were thinking deeply about what subtraction is: "A few months ago, this is what we thought about subtraction: $53-21=32$. Now, the word subtraction means so much more to us! Our minds have grown - take-away, difference, stacking, comparing, missing numbers, opposite of addition". Similarly, in a grade 3 integrated co-teaching class, students were generating thinking about fractions, and demonstrating enduring understanding about the relationships between parts and wholes.

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

Findings

Teacher teams work together in structured, inquiry-based collaborations to modify curriculum and tasks, support targeted learners, and address school-wide needs. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built capacity and have a voice in key decisions.

Impact

In addition to improving learning outcomes for students, teachers value the benefits that true collaboration has brought to strengthening their instructional practice, and their roles in making key decisions both individually and as teams.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers acknowledge that while they have long worked in teams, authentic teacher collaboration was slow in development. This year, however, with a clear instructional focus, and protocols that help everyone contribute with greater self-direction, they express that they have turned a corner with respect to the depth and impact their teams are having. The observed grade level team, while still having room for growth, was clearly focused on the school wide goals of increasing achievement for individual students by improving their own practice. The conversation centered on how to improve students' abilities in writing introductions. Teachers evaluated the final writing product from their most recent unit and tried to determine how to strengthen this area for the next unit of study. A brainstorming session transpired in which each teacher walked away with a strategy they were going to try for their specific target student. One teacher shared how her work with the team has changed her whole approach to writing, and that she has moved from teaching whole class writing to a guided writing approach with small groups.
- A major shift this year has been the growth of a strong vertical team. This team consists of a wide array of teachers who have committed to working together to address curricular, pedagogical and assessment issues that the school may confront. They are currently working together on creating rubrics for student writing for use across grade levels and will create a common language and bring coherence to the school's assessment practices in writing. This team has already worked to develop classroom lab sites, which most teachers participated in during the fall semester.
- Through the vertical team and the roles people play on their grade level teams, distributed leadership and teacher voice in key decision-making have taken hold in the school. Teacher leaders are helping to improve practice in the school using the lab sites. Recognizing that it has taken them a long time to get to this point of collaboration, teachers shared that they feel more empowered now than previously, and that their work in modifying curriculum, in particular, has helped them to leave an imprint on the school.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teaching practices in the majority of classrooms reflect a commitment to the school's instructional goals and beliefs, are aligned to the curricula and informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The instruction provides an engaging environment for all students.

Impact

The curricular aligned teaching practices that are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching are resulting in student work products and discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation in the majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's main instructional goals this year focus on oral language development, academic vocabulary, and improving Common Core aligned writing skills. The school's commitment to its students, the overwhelming majority of whom are either current or former ELLs, drives these goals. Throughout most classrooms, teachers paid careful attention to the language they were using and the way they were using it, providing many scaffolds and opportunities for students to practice their speaking. Although there were some classrooms where there were missed opportunities for high quality discussion, in the majority of classes, teachers encouraged students to practice their speaking skills. In addition, the strategies developed by the work in growth mindset were also evident. Students were encouraged to solve their own problems, take risks with their oral presentations, or turn and talk to partners about observations they were making.
- In a grade 3 science class, students were exploring herbs. The teacher first asked students to come up with their own definitions of the word herb. To ensure that all students, in particular the ELLs, had an appropriate definition, the students spoke to one another and then the teacher charted their ideas. There was a debate about whether or not looking up the word in the dictionary would be helpful. After the class agreed on a definition, the teacher offered a refined definition. The students then set about doing their experiment, which incorporated rich scientific vocabulary such as classifying, analyzing, texture and other words.
- During the student meeting, it was evident that students felt the work they were doing was, for the most part, engaging and challenging. Students shared persuasive essays, PowerPoint presentations on researched topics, literary essays, math projects, and non-fiction reading responses. Teachers also shared that the work around growth mindset has resulted in much deeper thinking, because students are no longer thinking that they must get the "right answer, right away."