



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**P.S. 137 John Bernstein**

**Elementary 01M137**

**293 East Broadway  
Manhattan  
NY, 10002**

**Principal: Melissa Rodriguez**

**Date of review: Nov 17, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Simmons**

## The School Context

P.S. 137 John L. Bernstein is a/an elementary school with 202 students from PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 26% Black, 55% Hispanic, 4% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English Language Learners and 33% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teachers examine data and student work consistently within the inquiry-based teams. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

### Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- One teacher described the administration as “always listening” and other teachers stated that they were empowered to request and receive coaching and resource support with unit planning.
- After review of student work, teachers are given the discretion of requesting additional materials to use for guided reading.
- Based on the school’s instructional focus, teachers collaborate on strategies to implement in the classes. During a fourth and fifth grade teacher team meeting, teachers shared the implementation of math conversations and congress to elevate the talk in the classroom. Teachers state that discussions are more thoughtful and students are more engaged in the lessons.
- The teachers make modifications in English Language Arts to strengthen its curriculum, concentrating on developing guided reading pedagogy to improve student reading skills and incorporating grand conversations to support intentional talk in the classroom.
- Teacher teams share that the school strengthened its focus on math fluency, recognizing that students’ lack of fluency was affecting their ability to complete multi-step problems.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Observation of teaching practice indicates an uneven application of differentiation and instructional strategies to provide appropriately challenging and rigorous learning opportunities that promote high achievement.

### Impact

As a result, all students are not demonstrating higher order thinking skills through discussions or meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- In classes where there are many students with disabilities, the pacing of lessons and introduction of new language is sometimes inconsistent with students' learning needs. For example in one math class the teacher used several math terms in a lesson on measurement while demonstrating a task, yet few students demonstrated that they comprehended the new words.
- In a second grade Science classroom students used question stems to engage in discussions and ask clarifying questions of classmates.
- During classroom visits, students worked independently or in small groups but were not effectively challenged and were unable to engage in meaningful dialogue with their peers.
- During a fourth grade reading task all students were asked to provide evidence to a question after reading a text and were to share their thinking with a partner, however tables of students were not able to execute the task. Little supports were provided for struggling students or students with disabilities.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Higher-order skills are emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

### Impact

All students have access to rigorous standards aligned curricula across grades and subject areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across content areas, curriculum maps reflect rigorous high order thinking skills to meet the needs of all students to improve learning outcomes. The school employs a multitude of resources focused on the integration of the instructional shifts. For example, in math, teachers create their own curriculum maps using Context for Learning and Go Math and in English Language Arts (ELA), teachers adapt Expeditionary Learning curriculum using an interdisciplinary approach that utilizes the New York City Scope and Sequence for Social Studies.
- Lesson plans include a toolkit of strategies for students reflecting academic tasks that require higher order thinking.
- The school strategically chose to focus on using text-based evidence to improve students' attention to details. Each subject emphasizes the increased use of nonfiction texts. The classroom libraries have more non-fiction texts for students to choose for independent and home reading. Curricula for literacy periods encourage the use of non-fiction text, such as science and social studies.

**Findings**

Providing students with effective feedback and checks for understanding are inconsistent across classrooms.

**Impact**

Adjustments to instruction based on checks for understanding are inconsistent and not all students are able to monitor or guide their own learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers' feedback to students across grades is inconsistent in that comments do not consistently align to the rubric or guide students on how to improve their work. During the interview, students were unable to comprehend their next steps based on the feedback or lack thereof. For example, a student stated "I do not know how to improve my grade. I guess, I can work on details."
- During the interviews, teachers and principals state that checks for understanding are assessed in various ways. However, there were limited checks of students' understanding as a result students were disengaged demonstrated on various work products and lack of writing.
- Visits to classrooms reveal that in the upper grades, students are using rubrics as a tool to guide their work. However, early childhood students have yet to fully understand how to use the tool to support their work.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

The school consistently communicates high expectations to parents and staff.

### **Impact**

Structures that support the school's high expectations build accountability amongst staff and families providing a trajectory towards enhanced student achievement and college and career readiness.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- To establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, the administration provides a Staff Handbook, such as the importance participation in professional development, as well as incorporating proven instructional practices to support the school's academic goals. School leaders communicate, support and hold teacher's accountable for high expectations through formal and informal observations.
- School leaders articulate expectations to the staff grounded in the school's chosen research based framework via correspondence, professional development, workshops and inquiry teams. Faculty has embraced the Danielson's Framework and welcomes the timely feedback provided by the administration to support pedagogical practices and hold them accountable.
- In order to ensure parents are apprised of student expectations, school leaders and faculty communicate with families via parent bulletins, newsletters and parent workshops. Curriculum nights are held to inform parents of curricula content. Parents express that the school does communicate with them about curriculum and school events, information about the Common Core Learning Standards and "what it takes for their children to make it" is provided for them.