

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 149 Sojourner Truth

K-8 03M149

**41 WEST 117 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10026**

Principal: Barbara Darrigo

**Dates of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Ilene Altschul**

The School Context

P.S. 149 Sojourner Truth is a K-8 school with 339 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 60% Black, 32% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 89.6%.

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.	Focus	Developing
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	Developing
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	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	Developing

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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development

Rating: Developing

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations with emphasis on examining student work and sharing instructional strategies.

Impact

The work of the teacher teams is beginning to align with the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), build coherence and strengthen teacher pedagogy.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal states that teachers utilize the team meeting time to work collaboratively looking at student work and data as evident through review of team meeting agendas and minutes. They follow the consultancy protocol and one teacher is the facilitator and one is the recorder. Teachers determine the next steps and the administration expects to see evidence of the work during classroom observations.
- Teachers meet in academies a minimum of once a week. Both academies are focusing their team meetings on improving student writing. The middle school team was looking at strategies to enhance the body of the essay and the lower academy team is looking at developing students' conclusions.
- During the middle school team meeting, teachers across grades and content areas reviewed the same student writing and the student's reflection sheet as a follow-up from the previous week. Each teacher identified the area of improvement. Another teacher then shared a concern around students' struggle with writing a thesis statement. Teachers recommended that they create an outline or a flow chart to get their ideas organized before starting to write.
- Teachers state that the team meetings provide them with an opportunity to "bounce ideas off of each other" and find strategies to support the students in the bottom third. Teachers state that the academy meeting supports their work across content areas as well through the content area writing and vocabulary development using the Word Generation program. Teachers share the same students and are able to discuss their individual achievement and needs.
- Teachers indicate that they have a critical friends group in which they visit each other's classrooms and provide feedback particularly around classroom environment. They have also visited other schools and reflected and shared during the professional collaboration time. As a result of a visit, they identified the importance of strategically planning the questions to enhance classroom discussions.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although curricula are in the process of being fully developed and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) across all content areas, the level of rigor and critical thinking for all students varies across classrooms.

Impact

The lack of fully developed curricula inconsistently provides students with opportunities for high-level thinking and cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is utilizing Ready Gen in grades kindergarten through grade five and Expeditionary Learning in grades six through eight for the literacy curricula. School leaders and staff state that there is greater emphasis on reading and writing daily. They have built an independent reading block in the middle school. Students are expected to complete a “4 Squares of Reading”. The school added several programs such as Foundations to address the gaps in phonemic awareness in Kindergarten through grade 2, Light Sail a technology-based reading program for grades three through five, and Word Generation for middle school to enhance their vocabulary. There is inconsistent evidence that the programs are integrated to ensure a comprehensive literacy curriculum to address the needs of all students.
- Teachers have developed science and social studies units following the scope and sequence. The unit plans include the standards, the essential questions, and the assessments that will be administered. However, the academic tasks do not consistently emphasize high-level thinking. For example, in a unit on the American Revolution, students were asked to respond to which side they think they would have been on: Patriots or Red Coats. Students responses did not require them to cite evidence to support their reasons nor did the teacher encourage a discussion thus limiting their thinking and cognitive challenge.
- Teachers state that they ensure the curricula are engaging to the students by making it meaningful and relate to real-world experiences for example using mathematical thinking to determine the best deal when buying a car. However, there was limited evidence of students explaining their thinking in mathematics. In two out of four math classes visited students were solving computational problems following the steps.
- Teachers plan for social studies through the interdisciplinary approach integrating literacy and technology. Teachers state that through a hands-on activity, particularly in the culminating project, students become more interested in the unit. For example in sixth grade, students did research and created a travel brochure for different countries but the brochure required the students to recall and include the facts of the country without any critique or analysis.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While teaching practices are beginning to align with the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, instructionally there are inconsistent entry points, supports and scaffolds to engage all students in high-level thinking.

Impact

Across classrooms, there were limited opportunities for students to be appropriately challenged in academic tasks or discussions inhibiting increased achievement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers state that they have received professional development on the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The administration provides them with opportunities to visit other classes and schools and they view videos to highlight the expectations for increasing student engagement and raising the level of their questioning and discussion. However teachers inconsistently incorporated these strategies into their lessons.
- The administration states that teachers are expected to provide multiple entry points for all students through demonstration lessons, small group lessons and independent work. In one class, students were given independent work and the teacher provided a reteach lesson to a few students who struggled with the concept. Conversely, in another class all students were solving the same problem regardless whether they had mastered or struggled with the concept.
- Foundations program is being utilized as a phonemic awareness intervention program in grades kindergarten through two. During a foundations lesson, the whole class was actively responding in the lesson even though the teacher stated that all the students were not struggling with the sounds therefore, not meeting the needs of all learners. Similarly, in an eighth grade math class, all students received four pages of math problems to complete. The problems got progressively more difficult and labeled level one through four. The teacher stated that the majority of the students had no difficulty with level one and some had no challenge with the level two questions however, he doesn't move forward until ninety percent have reached mastery. As a result, not all students are challenged and instruction is unevenly aligned to the students' needs.
- During a visit in an integrated co-teaching class, all students were engaged in a whole group discussion. The questions required the students to identify events in the life of Sojourner Truth and make inferences about the influences in her life. Students were then to complete a graphic organizer. The cooperating teacher was circulating during the lesson and provided one student with a vocabulary word on an index card as an additional support. All students did not participate in the class discussion and they all were to complete the same task and therefore were not cognitively challenged.

Findings

The school primarily utilizes common assessments in English language arts to track student progress. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of checks for understanding to meet all students' learning needs.

Impact

Teachers varying use of assessment data to make adjustments to curricula, lessons, and instruction is impeding the academic progress of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school tracks the students' reading level using the Teachers College assessment. The reading levels are also charted in the assistant principal's office. Teachers analyze the data and determine next steps. For example in grade four, the Light Sail program is being utilized as an intervention and the teacher noted the need to increase small group instruction. However there was inconsistent evidence the intervention program and small group instruction is resulting in an increase in student reading levels since the data indicates sixty-eight percent of the students remained on the same level or declined a level since the beginning of the school year.
- In the fifth grade class, the teacher utilized the results from the mid-unit assessment in the Go Math program to identify students that are struggling. As a result, the teacher worked with the students in a small group for a reteach lesson. Conversely, in a multi-grade class, the students were grouped by grade and received a small group lesson according to the grade level standards rather than students' individual needs.
- In a sixth grade class, the teacher began the lesson by assessing the students' understanding through the use of an entrance ticket. All students solved the problem and then an assistant checked the students' work. The teacher stated that the results are used to determine the groups. However, the teacher was unaware of the results and proceeded to review the problem with the whole class limiting the teachers' ability to challenge the students that solved the problem successfully.
- The school has created an assessment calendar indicating baseline assessments in all subject areas in September as well as end of year assessments to be given in May and June. During the school year there are two set additional running records to identify student progress in reading levels and the fall benchmark assessment in English language arts and math. There is limited evidence that the results are utilized to make adjustments in curricula and instruction.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school communicates expectations to staff, families and students and is beginning to hold all constituents accountable for the expectations.

Impact

The culture for adult and student learning provides limited support and feedback to ensure that all students are making progress and prepared for the next grade level.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration communicates expectations to the staff through professional development sessions, observations and team meetings. The staff has received professional development and feedback around classroom environment, effective questioning and engaging students in learning. Teachers complete evaluation sheets about how they will apply what they have learned and what evidence the administration will see in their classroom. Based on the evaluation sheets and classroom visits, that component was either not completed or there was little follow-up to ensure that teachers are accountable to implementing the instructional practices.
- A review of student work indicates limited feedback to students. In five out of the seven classes visited, displayed student work had limited feedback hindering their preparation for the next grade level. Students state that they are not always challenged but their teachers support them. They stated that the feedback they receive helps them know areas that they need to improve.
- Teachers and staff send out monthly newsletters to parents. The newsletters include reminders of upcoming events, important dates, and updates from the teachers on what the students are learning. In addition, parents receive progress reports so that they are informed of their child's academic growth, and work habits. Parent workshops on topics such as attendance, literacy, and homework help are regularly held but there is insufficient parents' participation. One workshop for middle school parents on technology had no attendees.
- Teacher teams are beginning to set clear expectations for students. During the middle school meeting teachers reviewed student work and student reflection to determine students' next steps towards increasing achievement.