



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Robert E. Simon

Elementary School M165

**234 West 109 Street
Manhattan
NY 10025**

Principal: Aracelis Castellano-Folk

**Date of review: March 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Roxan Marks**

The School Context

Robert E. Simon is an elementary/middle school with 825 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 14% Black, 70% Hispanic, 11% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.0%.

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	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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	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
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff who engages in professional learning activities aligned with Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff effectively partner with families and students to communicate expectations for college readiness.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations is shared by staff that ensures that families and students understand student progress toward those expectations and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through the staff handbook, messages, emails and grade meetings. The school Professional Learning Committee (PLC) team supports the development of the school professional learning plan and includes learning through: lab-site activities; job embedded professional development; teacher teams and other areas. The professional development plan uses data from various sources to create learning opportunities for staff. Some of the professional learning topics include Danielson Framework, using data, building knowledge in teachers to implement Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula, behavior management and working with special needs students.
- Teachers display signs with the colleges they attended and the technology teacher works with students to conduct research and create a booklet about a college of their choice. Guidance staff supports the high school process and partnership with Appleseed and Boys and Girls Club exposes students to career paths. Student Council ensures that student voice is heard and they also focus on college readiness.
- Principal distributes newsletters that highlight staff members and accomplishments, parent university news, learning leaders and other areas of interest to the community. This newsletter is also translated in Spanish. Class newsletters provide ongoing communication for parents. The school informs parents of their child's progress through letters that identify assessment and percent proficient. These reports also provide a list of skills that children need to work on and requires parents to sign and return to school.
- Parent University affords workshops for families on Common Core Standards in literacy and math. Open houses share curriculum and expectations for students. Parents stated that teachers communicate using newsletters and reach out when necessary. Parents shared that the homework sheet is helpful and the clear list of subject area topics to be covered is very useful.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the school's core beliefs were evident in classrooms. Multiple entry points were evident in classrooms.

Impact

In most classrooms, the lesson provided scaffolds and entry points for learners; however, student ownership of their learning and high quality extensions are not yet embedded across all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to curricula and reflected the beliefs about how students learn best. The school believes that students learn best by doing and engaging with work, partnership talks, conferring, strategy groups, teachers asking higher order questions and students sharing their thought process.
- Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provided multiple entry points into the curricula so that students can demonstrate their thinking. The school used digital technology as evidenced in a grade 4 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom. During the lesson students were comparing and contrasting using video clips and recording findings on a Venn diagram and followed up with independent practice to compare two texts using techniques learned.
- In a grade 4 lesson, students were learning to measure objects. The teacher used the Smart board and made connections to the previous lesson and modeled for students. The lesson had a 'turn and talk' for students; however, the lesson was dominated by the teacher and student voices was seldom heard.
- During a writing lesson, students were using the element of personification in their poems as they worked with a partner using a checklist to guide their work. The personification checklist had visual prompts and columns for partners to check if the elements were seen in the work. The teacher was conferencing with two students. Students were given objects to use as they wrote their poems and different graphic organizers were used by students.
- In most classrooms visited, there was flexible grouping, and accountable talk stems used; however, tiered assignments, high level discussions and ownership were not consistently seen. Multimedia was seen in most rooms, charts that supported content were evident and in a few classrooms, the charts were photographed and students had copies in their notebooks. In a few classrooms, students helped each other and invited peers to comment on work. Discussion was taking place with the support of the teachers and student learning was hampered by lack of teacher release and ownership of the learning to students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic tasks are refined using student work products and data.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build curricular coherence by emphasizing higher order thinking skills for all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared that one of the foci is on the standards of mathematical practices standards in each unit. Across classrooms, it was evident that math tools and solving problems related to everyday life were used during instruction. The principal shared that they noticed that students were not independent and as a result this year they are working on fostering independence by gradual release of scaffolds. He also shared that teachers were providing too much support and not allowing students to develop self-sufficiency and ownership which will assist them in being college and career ready.
- Last year, the school began using Depth of Knowledge (DOK), Bloom's Taxonomy and Hess to ensure that higher order thinking is integrated in lessons and curricula. This year, rigor was also examined by teachers as they looked closely at tasks, lessons and activities. Technology is used to support English language learners and students with disabilities through on-level reading texts using RAZZ Kids and Reading A-Z. Math lesson for unit 7.4 includes three tiered and differentiated activities reflecting DOK levels based on student data and required students to use their knowledge of coins to represent amounts less than a dollar.
- Unit plans reviewed contain big ideas and essential questions as well as unit goals. Most units include vocabulary; however, some unit plans did not clearly define the key words that students are expected to learn. Skills and strategies are included and some plans provide very explicit supports for English language learners and students with disabilities. The use of DOK and Hess matrix was evident in most unit plans. Some teachers are using Planbook.com to write detail with small group or learning station plans, DOK leveled questions and differentiated activities.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff create and use assessments, rubric and grading policy that are aligned to key standards. Common assessments are used to determine progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school uses assessments and grading practices to examine data against learning outcomes, make modifications to curricula, and provide actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is using Data Driven Instruction (DDI) this year and is working with teachers to use data to look at subgroups and track the progress towards goals for students. The reading, writing and math tracker is used at least four times a year to collect formative assessment data. This data is looked at by teacher teams and decisions are made by teachers on how to differentiate lessons and make adjustments to units to meet student needs.
- Teachers use rubrics to provide feedback and next steps to students. Rubrics are used by students to assess their work. Teachers conduct conferences with students and most used a conferring form to document notes on students. During observations of classrooms, a few teachers were using notes and math checklist as they conferred with students in small group providing them with actionable feedback to work on.
- State data is analyzed to inform adjustments to units and guide teachers in focusing on priority standards. Data from benchmarks and formative assessments is shared by class level and grade level. For example, the math data tracker consists of all unit assessments with a percentage correct by individual students. Grade level percentages show growth from benchmarks from September to March.
- School leaders use common assessments to inform decisions for intervention programs, inter-visitation and adjustment to curricular calendars. Teachers use data to create guided reading groups and provide feedback to students. For example, a data chart was created for students who were below grade level for ELA in grades K-8. This document tracks the level and also includes a growth column to assess quickly those students making progress in reading. Students below grade level in math are tracked for progress across time and growth is included to quickly assess students making gains or place those requiring additional interventions.
- Data is used by the Child Study team to develop a better understanding of the students and the challenges faced in learning. These detailed reports provide background information, testing data, benchmark assessments, areas of concern, intervention strategies used, summary of conferring notes on student over time and educational impact. The team suggests strategies for teachers to use as well as referrals for academic intervention or other supports as needed.

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

The majority of teachers participates in collaborative inquiry and support the integration of the instructional shifts and Common Core Standards. Distributive leadership offers teachers a voice in key decisions.

Impact

The participation in teacher team collaboration had increased teachers’ instructional abilities and student progress toward goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in structured collaborations using an inquiry approach. Teams meet regularly and follow norms and expectations. Teams keep agendas and minutes which are reviewed by administration. Teacher team works together to ensure shifts are integrated in curricula plans and lessons. The use of protocols by teams helps to keep the process running smoothly and coherent across teams. Teachers look at data to identify areas that students have difficulty in reaching proficiency and identify common strategies among team members to address those areas. Once a month the Think Tank/Coherency team which consists of grade leaders meet with school leadership. This team brings issue and concerns to administration. Vertical teams in grades 6 through 8 meet by content. The Positive Behavior Intervention Services (PBIS) committee supports the social-emotional development.
- During the team observation, teachers were working with Data Driven Instruction (DDI) by looking at item analysis pertaining to a recent assessment and noting the common errors made by students. The team focused on question 5 which was a common error made by most students on the assessment. Teachers looked closely at the question and discussed the language in the question that may have caused difficulty with some students. Teachers decided that students need to make sense of the problem and find the entry point to the solution.
- Distributive structures are evident and teachers shared that their voice is heard by leadership. Teachers stated that as a grade they take ownership of their work and they shared that some teachers were involved in a pilot with Light Sail last year and teachers advocated for more technology and the principal supported this effort. Furthermore, teachers engage in inter-visitations to classrooms and other schools to increase their capacity.