

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 191 Amsterdam

Elementary-Middle School M191

**210 West 61 Street
Manhattan
NY 10023**

Principal: Lauren Keville

**Dates of review: March 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cynthia Dickman**

The School Context

P.S. 191 Amsterdam is a K-8 school with 490 students from PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 33% Black, 47% Hispanic, 11% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-15 was 92.2%.

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	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	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.	Celebration	Proficient

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:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations, provide training to the entire staff and have a system of accountability for the expectations. The school communicates these expectations and progress to the students and families to ensure college and career readiness.

Impact

The school establishes a culture that communicates high expectations for learning and success to the teachers, students and families and provides support to ensure progress towards the expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and paraprofessionals participate in ongoing professional development every Monday with a focus on setting and maintaining high expectations for students through work on school culture and improving instruction. The book *Lost at School* was used during the professional development at the start of the year to focus on shifting the way the school leaders and teachers address the needs of their most struggling students. As a result, teachers stated the culture has improved this year with clear systems for addressing students' behaviors.
- The staff developed a "Kid Talk Protocol" so that they have common language and systems for discussing and addressing the needs of their students. The impact of the development of kid talk protocol is that teachers stated they are now using collaborative problem solving and de-escalation strategies as they encounter students who require support and redirection.
- This year, the school implemented a new school-wide curriculum, "Mind-Up", to work with their students on self-regulation, self-reflection and metacognition. The teachers then led a parent workshop on the "Mind-Up" curriculum. Parents stated that they use the strategies from the Mind-Up curriculum that are being incorporated at school in their homes.
- During the parent meeting, parents stated the school has high expectations and regularly communicates regarding their children's progress. Parents also indicated that any concerns they brought to the attention of the school are handled immediately. They indicated that the school uses parent engagement time on Tuesdays, the school's website, newsletters, Engrade, Class Dojo, texts, emails and phone calls to ensure that all of their children are prepared for the next grade level.
- The school includes practices connected to college and career readiness. Students utilize technology to support their learning. The newly created school's multi-media lab with specialized "green wall" is used by students as technology is incorporated in all curricula areas. Students stated that using the new lab for projects such as *Esperanza Rising*, is also creating opportunities connected to the performing arts and drama, which students are interested in pursuing further in college. Other students indicated that the teachers give them advanced work that helps prepare them for the next grade and the future challenges they will face. Students also stated that the teachers challenge them by switching the groups they are in and establishing new criteria that must be met.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching strategies across classrooms inconsistently provided entry points, supports and scaffolds to engage all students in high-level thinking. There were uneven levels of student thinking and participation across the school.

Impact

Due to limited scaffolds, there was uneven engagement by all learners in the academic tasks, therefore not all students' work products and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, the tasks inconsistently challenged students with higher-level thinking questions. In one upper and lower grade classroom, student discussions reflected high-levels of student thinking and participation as the teacher asked questions that included, "What are you wondering? What are our other options for solving this? Do you agree or disagree and why or why not?" However, lessons in both a lower and upper grade classroom were teacher directed and the pattern of questioning went from teacher to student to teacher.
- While in classrooms, students were seated in groups or with partners and were encouraged to work with their classmates with set structures for discussion and student roles. Yet in one science class lesson, not all students were on task or engaged. In one lower grade English language arts (ELA) lesson, the students were grouped heterogeneously but there was little opportunity for conversation among the students.
- The administration states that teachers in integrated co-teaching classrooms are expected to ensure that all of the adults in the classroom are an integral part of the lesson and that both of the teachers, as well as the paraprofessionals are being planned into the lessons. In a lower grade ICT classroom, the two teachers were working with groups of students to scaffold the work. The special education teacher was chunking the text for the students as an additional support. Alternatively, in two other classrooms, the special education teachers had limited interaction with the students therefore the needs of all of the students in the classroom were inconsistently met by both teachers.
- Students indicate that they feel supported by their teachers and are provided with support as they read, analyze text and complete research projects. Work products such as the sixth grade Rube Goldberg Project demonstrated the students' deep thinking and challenging work. However, in another class with students in multiple grade levels, students were not provided with grade appropriate text for the ELA lesson resulting in work products with uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula across grade levels are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate content standards and the instructional shifts. The curriculum emphasizes rigorous habits and tasks across classrooms and promotes higher order thinking skills.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence, promoting college and career readiness for all learners. Academic tasks push student thinking across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills where students work in groups or pairs to solve what are often "real-life" problems and write about their process. Structures for discussion are planned into the teachers' lessons with roles that ensure student engagement. In fifth grade, students completed a project on *Esperanza Rising* and the 911 Memorial, where students had to analyze how different people in different times respond to the challenges and struggles in their lives. In addition to students reading and writing an essay about how people persevered, students used the media lab to act out skits and project different time periods which enabled all of the students, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs), to be engaged in tasks preparing them for college and career.
- The New York State assessment data from last year revealed a need to focus on reading so the school made a purposeful decision to increase students' independent reading in grades six to eight by ninety minutes a week. This decision was based on the need to ensure rigor and increase close reading of texts for the students. The impact of this decision has been an increase in students reading independently using high interest books of varied Lexile ranges.
- Within each unit of study, lesson plans and tasks are differentiated to meet the needs of all students. Units of study reviewed in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies include questions of higher level thinking, modifications for Tier 1 and Tier 2 students and resources for enrichment. Lesson plans include how teachers will ensure that all students can access the lesson and that it is tailored to meet the needs of all students and how teachers will plan for students who need to be pushed to the next level and the specific grouping of students. Special education teachers co-plan with their general education counterparts to ensure that all students have access to rigorous tasks while also receiving the support they need and pushing students with individualized education plans (IEPs) to meet their annual goals.
- Teachers meet regularly for collaborative planning to ensure coherent instruction across the grade. Within planning time, teachers uncovered a gap with investigational skills in the Connected Math Program Third Edition (CMP3) Mathematics. Therefore, in seventh and eighth grade a double period was scheduled daily to provide the teacher with additional time to differentiate resulting in greater student independence within the math classroom.

Findings

Teachers are beginning to use formative and summative assessment data and rubrics to provide feedback to students. The use of checks for understanding varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, limited feedback from assessments including the beginning practice of student self-assessment is starting to ensure students are aware of their next learning steps. Student learning needs are inconsistently met in classroom instruction because of uneven effective adjustments based on checks for understanding.

Supporting Evidence

- This year, two new assessments have been implemented which align with the school's instructional focus: the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) in grades five through eight and Writing Pathways Writing Assessment in Kindergarten through eighth grade from Teachers College. The school has started to use data from the DRP Assessment to identify students in need of further intervention, to plan student groupings, and to provide feedback to students. They will administer the DRP three times next year to be able to better track student growth, to differentiate instruction and to share the results with students and families. Teachers are in the process of analyzing the assessment results of the Writing Pathways Writing Assessments. Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grades administer Fountas and Pinnell Running Records four to five times a year to assess students' reading levels. To date, the data has shown that 73% of the students have made growth. The 27% of students who have been identified as not making growth are receiving additional instruction through guided reading, classroom interventions, Great Leaps and Saturday Academy. Students are also receiving differentiated support through Success Maker and Lightsail.
- Teachers are beginning to use checks for understanding and student self-assessment within their lessons. These include techniques like turn and talk, thumbs up/thumbs down, five finger assessments, exit slips, questioning, conferencing, quizzes, tests, peer assessment and student checklists. In one class, students were asked to answer questions and verbally defend their response with text from the evidence that was used by the teacher to assess the students' comprehension and understanding. Alternatively, in another class the teacher stated that as she circulates around the classroom she can identify misconceptions students are facing, but needs to get better at knowing if the objective was met by all students. Lesson plans for some of the teachers include how they will assess students and check for understanding. Students stated that when they are unsure of their next steps, they use the three before me rule to before going to the teacher to ask for help.
- Rubrics are being used and teachers are beginning to provide students with feedback so that students are connecting their work to the rubric and are aware of next learning steps. A review of student work across a variety of grades and subjects showed inconsistent use of rubrics in all subject areas. On work displayed in one classroom, there were rubrics and teacher feedback including students' next steps on all student work. Alternatively, work displayed in another classroom has no feedback in any subject area. One student stated they get feedback on every piece of work that gets put in their portfolio. Another student stated they get feedback on their major assignments.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in grade level teams for collaborative planning and analyzing student work that promotes the achievement of Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Teachers take on leadership roles and are empowered to give input in key school-wide decisions.

Impact

As a result of collaborative planning and teacher voice in curriculum and professional development, there is an increase in teachers' instructional capacity.

Supporting Evidence

- The observed teacher team started out the year by looking at the Common Core power standards in writing and reading. Teachers were asked to identify what the standard was asking the students to be able to do. Then the teachers looked at the instructional shifts to see what adjustments needed to be made to the instruction so that students could meet the standards. As a result, close reading of text was identified as the focus. The teachers agreed to a common instructional strategy of modelling, followed by students coding text and using the text to support their conversations.
- Teacher teams meet each week to complete a data analysis of student work. This year a data tracking system was created. All teachers utilize the data to develop an action plan for targeted students. Action plans include how teachers are progress monitoring, what teachers are doing to support struggling students, what modifications are in place and what specific intervention strategies are being implemented to support students. In addition, teachers recently reformatted the data to easily track student growth.
- The principal and teachers state that as a result of the work of teacher teams, teachers feel supported and empowered by the administration and there is a positive shift in the confidence of the staff. As a result, teachers are taking ownership and greater responsibility. For example, in the middle school grades, a teacher was leading the work on student portfolios and after sharing it with a lower grade teacher, the lower grade teacher began leading the work for the other staff on student portfolios.
- The teamwork this year has been focused on building capacity and collaboration. Teachers have taken on leadership roles such as team leaders, who meet weekly with administration with a focus on moving instructional practice. As a team, they have selected and will read the text entitled, *School Based Instructional Rounds Improving Teaching and Learning Across Classrooms*, by Lee Teitle. This decision was made based on the reading of the book by a team member, and follow-up conversations. The team will continue to identify problems of practice and lead their grade level teams to develop plans of action. In addition, these teacher leaders have opened up their classrooms for inter-visitations.
- Teacher teams use the Looking at Student Work Protocol to assess student work and identify areas of need. Then the teachers adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students. In reviewing the assessments, First grade teachers identified that student writing needed work so they had added an opinion-writing unit and as a result, students' writing pieces are starting to show growth.