



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 194 Countee Cullen

05M194

**244 West 144 Street
New York
NY 10030**

Principal: Josephine Bazan

**Date of review: January 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves**

The School Context

Countee Cullen is an elementary school with 177 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 50% Black, 45% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% other and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 29% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.1%.

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	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	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
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Findings

Administrators consistently convey their expectations to staff during trainings and other modes of communication. Workshops and performance updates keep families informed of student progress towards a path for middle school, high school and college and career readiness.

Impact

Training structures aligned to school leaders' verbal and written feedback offer support leading to shared accountability. Additionally, families have high praise for the support their children receive, resulting in home-school partnerships that support student success.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal's daily written announcements and memos to staff celebrate their accomplishments and continually keep them informed of her expectations. In varied memos, the principal thanked the staff for their attendance at the school's open house or other celebratory events, informs them of changes to the daily schedule, notifies them of due dates when curriculum calendars and formative assessment data should be sent to her as well as informs them of the foci of specific observational walkthrough visits to their classrooms.
- Parents shared that monthly meetings with the principal are "informative." They noted that school leaders and staff are readily available to address their concerns. One parent stated that "family involvement is a priority" and shared that parent attendance at school wide events such as the Million Man March and the Winter Festival has increased this school year.
- Monthly grade level curricula newsletters, the school's monthly calendar of events, weekly homework sheets, phone calls, face to face meetings and parent workshops, enable staff and parents to exchange ideas and discuss goals aligned to the staff's expectations for student success, in readiness for middle school and beyond. Student progress reports inform parents of their children's current and expected Fountas and Pinnell reading levels and provide specific strengths and areas in need of improvement in English language arts and math. For example, one student's progress report stated that while she is able to use search tools such as keywords and hyperlinks to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently, an area for growth is that she must respond to literature using text based evidence. Teachers also inform parents of suggested ways that they can help their children improve, such as "after your child reads, ask him/her questions that begin with the words how or why."
- School leaders share their expectations during snapshot classroom visits as well as provide written feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching after formal and informal observations. The school's professional learning plan is well aligned to the identified needs of staff. Staff and administrators engage in lab site visits to classrooms and they are all currently reading the book Learning Targets, by Susan Brookhart. After each meeting, school leaders expect that teachers apply their new learning when developing their lesson plans.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although teaching practices are becoming aligned to the written curricula and the tenets of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, teachers do not yet consistently incorporate effective questioning and discussion strategies.

Impact

Some teachers ask thought provoking questions but, across grades, teaching practices do not require all students to productively struggle with tasks. This limits the level of student engagement, resulting in uneven levels of participation across classrooms and lost opportunities for students to demonstrate high order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Student portfolios inconsistently demonstrate critical thinking tasks. Although students are asked to cite evidence in class, some teachers are at the beginning stages of requiring students to gather and synthesize information, cite claims, draw conclusions and defend their positions on specific arguments.
- In an upper grade classroom, students worked collaboratively in table groups named after varied colleges and universities. The teachers posed open-ended questions and students responded to their peers' comments citing specific evidence from the text to defend identified themes of the story. Likewise, in a lower grade class, the teacher and paraprofessional worked with small groups of students requiring them to use descriptive words verbally and in writing to describe characters in the story. However, these practices are not coherently used throughout the school. Students generated their own questions in only one classroom visited. Additionally, although accountable talk stems are posted in classrooms and some teachers ask thought provoking questions, others ask low-level questions. Teachers do not follow up on student responses and discussions in some classes are primarily between the teacher and individual students.
- The principal shared that teaching practices are expected to demonstrate the core belief that students learn best when lessons are student centered. Teachers are expected to use the workshop model to support learning. However, the use of the workshop model was not evident in the self-contained special education classroom and the focus on conceptual understanding in math problem solving is at the beginning stages across grades.
- Learning targets are written as student friendly "I can ..." statements and teachers explicitly inform students' of the lesson focus. Some teachers use scaffolding tools such as process charts to model concepts and encourage students to use math manipulatives. In one class, the teachers reviewed the prepared chart on visual elements and modeled citing key details and ideas in the text to support the identified theme. These practices are not consistent across classrooms. In other classrooms, teachers are not as adept at using exemplars and students are not frequently required to employ research strategies across multiple sources.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The English language arts and math curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. School staff members are beginning to align the social studies and science curricula to content standards and academic tasks across content areas that are not consistently rigorous.

Impact

All learners do not consistently have access to coherently sequenced curricula units of study and tasks do not always cognitively engage high performing learners. As such, all students are not consistently challenged and, at times have difficulty transferring their learning to new contexts.

Supporting Evidence

- The science curriculum is becoming aligned to state standards. For example in one lower grade classroom displayed student work products revealed that students are engaged in a study of the life cycle of animals with students drawing and describing in written form the life cycle of the frog. However in the same class, social studies work folders show that students wrote about varied topics such as holidays and they are not immersed in specific units of study.
- The principal shared that teachers are expected to use New York City's scope and sequence to plan social studies and science lessons. Although the scope and sequence depict essential questions, unit plans are not fully developed across both curricula areas and teachers do not plan lessons aligned to the essential questions to ensure that lessons are rigorous, sequenced and aligned to state standards.
- The foci of reading, writing and math content area units are posted in the hallway outside each classroom and pocket folders, displaying the flow of the day with lesson objectives aligned to standards, are clearly posted in each classroom. However, content area units of study are not coherently developed across all grades and the instructional shifts, including tiered academic vocabulary and multi-step math problem tasks are at the beginning stages of development.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers use rubrics inconsistently to provide written feedback. They do not regularly check for student understanding of taught concepts to meet the needs of all students.

Impact

The quality of feedback and assessment practices in all classrooms are not targeted to address students' needs and help them understand their next learning steps so that they are able to self – assess and demonstrate increased levels of mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers do not frequently regroup students based on learning needs and the quality of teachers' written feedback in some classrooms is not consistently targeted to ensure that students exceed performance standards.
- Students are aware of their Fountas and Pinnell reading levels and targeted goals. However, although students are able to verbally articulate their next steps in reading, they are not able to consistently do so across all content areas.
- Most teachers use English language arts and math rubrics to provide written feedback to students but the use of rubrics is not a consistent practice across all subject areas. In some classrooms and content areas, students' work is devoid of written feedback; this limits students' ability to fully understand their strengths and next steps so that they can support their own learning.
- Some teachers are beginning to take notes when they confer with students. However, this is not the norm for all staff. In one classroom, the teachers utilized a chart that asks students the following questions: *What are we doing? Why are we doing it? How do we do it?* However, many teachers do not regularly use checklists or incorporate other structures to assess student understanding. In addition, although fifth grade students are beginning to self - assess and provide verbal and written feedback to their peers, this is not a consistent practice across the school.

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

Weekly professional collaborations across grades enable teachers to analyze assessment data, student work products and share instructional strategies.

Impact

Vertical grade band team meetings enable teachers to assume a collective responsibility for improving pedagogic practices and student mastery of applicable learning standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Vertical grade bands are scheduled to meet weekly on specific days. Kindergarten and first grade teachers meet on Wednesdays, second and third grade on Tuesdays and fourth and fifth grade teachers collaboratively plan on Mondays using agendas and protocols.
- Teachers stated that one of the school's goals is focused on the development of collaborative practices. They shared that, as a result of their planning, their pedagogical skills enabling them to support students' ability to use close reading strategies when reading informational text have improved.
- During team meetings teachers analyze student work products. For example, at the fourth and fifth grade team meeting, the presenting teacher shared three work artifacts identified as high, medium and low from a pre-assessment writing task. Teachers reviewed the results to note strengths and next steps as they used a backwards planning methodology to plan the upcoming English language arts unit on opinion writing to ensure alignment to the performance standards.
- At team meetings teachers develop and review assessments, refine curricula and discuss needed instructional adjustments. For example, one Kindergarten teacher shared how a previous task required students to write one sentence. She revised the task and gave students varied types of paper so that they could write more in order to meet the differentiated needs of some students.