



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The James McCune Smith School

Elementary School M200

**2589 7th Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10039**

Principal: Renee Belton

**Date of review: April 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

The School Context

The James McCune Smith School is an elementary school with 501 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 55% Black, 40% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.3%.

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	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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff providing training and a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to college and career readiness to students and families offering feedback to help them understand student progress to meet those expectations.

Impact

The school sets high expectations and has built a system of accountability for students and teachers to meet them while providing supports to staff, students and families to achieve those expectations that prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teachers, students and families. An example of these expectations were documented in the PS 200 Parent and Staff Handbooks that outline responsibilities of teachers, (parent communication, providing quality education), students (being prepared for school, listening and following directions), parents (communicating with teachers and administrators, teaching respect and responsibility), and administrators (establishing clear expectations, provide books, materials and resources that support high quality education).
- The Parent Coordinator provides workshops for families on parenting skills, homework help, reading at home, family math, nutrition, bullying and health issues in English and Spanish. Detailed worksheets for parent instruction in Go Math, multiplication games families can play together at home and other supports for parents to assist their child both at home and at school.
- The school sends a detailed monthly parent calendar to all families translated in Spanish. Parents at the parent meeting referenced the school's calendar translated in Spanish as a resource that supports families in knowing key dates, events and workshops offered at the school.
- Through detailed pre and post observation meetings with teachers, school leadership articulate expectations in instruction and professionalism and follow up to ensure that the feedback leads to improved practice. In addition, school leaders develop professional learning opportunities based on observations and provided a calendar of supports based on teacher interest, area of strength and/or need.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices that facilitated collaborative activities and student-to-student discussions were inconsistent across classrooms. Student work products reflected uneven levels of student thinking and participation across classrooms.

Impact

Inconsistent instructional practices and varying levels of appropriately challenging tasks resulted in lost instructional opportunities for students to produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus is to improve student communication skills through the use of complete sentences, discussion techniques and listening skills for all students. However, limited opportunities for authentic student-to-student discussions were observed in some classes and class discussions were sometimes teacher centered rather than student centered. A few classes had students leading conversations, asking questions, pushing each other's thinking and working cooperatively to solve problems.
- In three of eight classes, students worked on unique tasks using different resources including graphic organizers, primary resources, and technology. For example, in a second/third grade dual language class, students were working in three different tasks in tiered partnerships. They were asked to demonstrate the ability to solve area and perimeter problems by applying previously learned formulas. However, in other classes explicit scaffolds or supports in instruction for English language learners and/or students with disabilities were not seen.
- Questions in some classrooms were posed for all students to formulate an answer. In some classes, questions were consistently within Webb's Depth of Knowledge Level 1: Recall. Questions heard included "Who can tell me one text feature?" "What is the perimeter area?" and "What do I need to find?" "Do you agree?"
- A review of student portfolios in some classes visited revealed inconsistent work in argumentative or narrative writing, stating a claim/counterclaim and text-based evidence. Additionally, in some classes student work products in math word problems were not evident and/or missing student writing to explain their thinking or how they solved the problem.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate the instructional shifts and ensure that curricula and academic tasks are rigorous, accessible for English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers based on student assessment data refine curricula and tasks.

Impact

Rigorous habits and higher order skills including those for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities are consistently emphasized in curricula and academic tasks across grades and subjects with some maps noting detailed supports, enrichment activities and examples of potential higher level thinking questions.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses ReadyGen for English language arts, Go Math for math, FOSS kits and Houghton Mifflin for Science, and McGraw Hill for Social Studies. School leaders and faculty align curricula to Common Core learning standards and create curriculum maps. The school's instructional coaches provide ongoing professional learning opportunities on adapting ReadyGEN and Go Math by creating scaffolds and supports for advanced students, ELLs and students with disabilities.
- Curricula have been developed to consistently emphasize rigorous tasks. For example, curriculum maps incorporate the use of textual evidence, multi-step word problems, academic vocabulary and Listen and Draw/Model and Draw activities to scaffold instruction for all students including ELLs and students with disabilities. ELL supports in math include identifying number sentences that don't belong in sets of three, identifying numeral relationships, and the use of manipulatives were planned into lessons.
- Grade level teacher teams meet formally once per week and informally daily during common prep time to adapt and refine curricula from ReadyGEN and Go Math. Curriculum maps reviewed included scripted supports for students with disabilities and ELLs, enrichment activities for advanced students and examples of potential higher level thinking questions such as "How does the model help you solve the problem?", "How is this problem like the last problem?", and "How is it different?"

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, checklists, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. In addition, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The results of inconsistent assessment practices across the school have hindered effective adjustments to instruction and have restricted teachers' and students' understanding of next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- During meetings with students, some were able to articulate what they were learning during class time or from their work products based on general feedback, which was not aligned to rubric language. In some classes, feedback to students included, "good job or excellent job", which did not provide them with detailed information to fully understand the expectations of their work, next steps or how to assess their own work or to make improvements.
- Across some classrooms, teachers checked for student understanding of assignments before moving on in the lesson by the use of thumbs up or down, asking probing questions, color coded slips of paper, or by listening to group conversations and recording notes. For example, students in a science class had to read articles, take notes, formulate an opinion, and then discuss with their group the differences of the texts that were read related to earthquakes and tsunamis. Students then had to work cooperatively to complete exit slips based on their understanding of natural disasters. However, this practice was not consistent across all classes.
- During class visits, teachers continued teaching without memorializing responses on a checklist and did not make necessary adjustments during the point of instruction as some students understood the material being taught and had to remain quiet while the teacher explicitly taught other students. In discussion with students during one lesson, they expressed being able to understand the task of using text-based evidence to support their opinion and they completed their work ahead of time.
- The school uses common assessment tools including curricula resources, running records, teacher created common assessments, as well as math and writing performance based assessments to determine student performance and progress toward mastery. There were some missed opportunities for teachers to use rubrics that are aligned to the standards or the task to provide actionable feedback to students. Additionally, while some teachers attempt to check for understanding during lessons by observing and listening in on student conversations or use the data to formulate small groups based on formative data, this practice is not consistent across the school.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations loosely connected to school goals and the integration of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams are beginning to analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teams meet formally at set times with agendas and sign in sheets that document next steps, however these practices were recently implemented and are loosely connected to school goals. The impact of teacher teamwork to improve teacher practice or progress toward goals of groups of students was limited.

Supporting Evidence

- The fifth grade team shared that they used to primarily meet informally during common prep periods to share resources and review student work, but now also meet formally to discuss student data and make curricular modifications and adaptations. Teachers have flexible roles on the team including recorder and timekeeper. An agenda from this team with activities including reflecting on small group instruction, analyzing student work samples from ReadyGEN and identifying next steps was provided.
- The school formed a professional development committee to help design, organize and lead professional learning opportunities for faculty. Most professional activities are facilitated by administration or instructional coaches. Administration supports teacher learning and growth through multiple opportunities for teachers to review student work to make adjustments. However, the school is in the beginning stages of allowing teachers to take ownership of planning, organizing workshops, and increasing the amount of intra and inter-visitations to help build capacity across the school around teachers asking more higher order thinking questions and promoting more student discussion.
- Teacher teams identified that the majority of students struggle with academic vocabulary and writing through analyzing common assessment data. In September, the leadership cabinet reviewed the New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test for English Language Learners student data, and made curricular adjustments including a focus on increasing vocabulary and improving student writing across classes.