



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Battery Park City School**

**Elementary M276**

**55 Battery Place  
Manhattan  
NY 10280**

**Principal: Terri Ruyter, Ed.D.**

**Date of review: January 7, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

## The School Context

The Battery Park City School is an elementary school with 875 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 5% Black, 11% Hispanic, 55% White, 22% Asian and 6% Multi-racial students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The school establishes high expectations for all constituent groups, including students, teachers, and families, through a variety of communication practices. The administration consistently messages important information to staff via the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and use of professional learning consultants.

### Impact

There is mutual accountability of student success by all stakeholders. These best practices have also resulted in high levels of professionalism, quality instruction, and effective communication around academic, social, and behavioral expectations for students resulting in improved student outcomes.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has clearly defined standards for professional development, including professional development plans that incorporate staff input, and classroom practices embedding elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to ensure that learning for all stakeholders consistently reflects high expectations. For example, teachers receive resources, a handbook, and purposefully coordinated professional learning opportunities geared to their areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
- School leaders create an elevated level of expectations for all staff, which is evident throughout the community through verbal and written structures such as ongoing workshops, a staff handbook and a school website that emulate a culture where accountability is reciprocal among all constituents.
- Teachers have established a culture for learning that provides all students, especially students with disabilities, with focused, effective feedback including clear next steps. These guide student accountability toward achieving their learning goals and expectations to better prepare them for their next grade while ensuring their ownership of the learning process.
- The school has a set of clear systematic structures for teachers and support staff to articulate high expectations and share information with students. This supports student progress toward mastery of Common Core Learning Standards and personal habits of mind as evidenced by the promotion of academic skills including note taking and the value of work habits.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teachers work effectively in collaborative teams within and across grades to share their practice, analyze data from common assessments, monitor student progress and make modifications to curriculum.

### Impact

These structured collaborations result in shared leadership structures and the implementation of curricular adjustments aimed at sustaining and improving learning outcomes. However, the inquiry-based collaborations that support student next steps sometimes limit some high performing students from making further improvements.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across teams, most teachers are able to articulate the instructional focus of assessment of student learning and monitor the progress of students and groups of students in order to improve instruction and curriculum units to improve student-learning outcomes. During one grade team meeting, teachers were looking at student expository writing samples across grades, with the focus on second and third grade. Teachers made decisions about what targets needed to be addressed at the current grade level and subsequent grade level to meet proficiency.
- Teacher teams are currently visiting with each other's classrooms to observe practice and share best practices during professional learning time. One teacher said that her practices have improved because of the work on teams as she is now able to revise her lessons and incorporate practices to improve her student's writing skills.
- Teacher teams include other staff members who support student subgroups throughout the school, particularly students with disabilities. The reading specialist, math coach and special education coordinator contribute their expertise to team meetings and recommend instructional approaches to colleagues around how to effectively support the needs of these learners when writing in response to non-fiction text; however, this work continues to be enhanced for the vast majority of teams at the school.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty make strategic curricula decisions that result in coherence and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards within and across grades and content areas. Teachers adjust curricula and tasks using student work and relevant data that have closed achievement gaps and increased cognitive engagement for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

### Impact

Rigorous habits are embedded across classrooms and within units and tasks that require all learners, including those in identified subgroups, to think critically and create their own meaning through evidence-based expectations. Teachers use student data to ensure all learners have access to curricula and tasks are cognitively engaging.

### Supporting Evidence

- School curriculum maps and tasks use a combination of resources that enable cross-curricular connections such as addressing non-fiction units aligned with social studies and science using a narrative thread that addresses the instructional shifts across subject areas.
- Math and English language arts curricula target key standards and demonstrate an increased focus on instructional shifts. For example, a fourth grade lesson plan required students to work on different math activities where they had to complete a variety of high level tasks to demonstrate their understanding of multiples and factors to determine equivalent fractions. Each task afforded students opportunities to demonstrate a deep understanding of concepts and the ability to solve and apply them in real world math situations.
- There is a strategic balance of fiction and non-fiction text, and opportunities for immersion in each genre at grade level and beyond, through increased use of complex text aligned to authentic real world tasks within units of study. These units include appropriate scaffolds such as visual supports, graphic organizers, and differentiated homework across all content areas and across grades.
- The school uses information from standardized tests and item skills analyses to modify curricula and redesign tasks to help students apply conceptual knowledge to high-level questions. Teachers design tasks that allow students multiple opportunities to incorporate deeper meaning of content and apply it to their writing or math problem solving.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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## Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices align to the curriculum and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teachers facilitate deep student discussions about their work and engage them in collaborative learning experiences.

## Impact

The school's coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best is driving quality instruction that meets the needs of all learners and elevates student thinking so that all students produce meaningful work products, resulting in the production of quality student work that demonstrates student ownership.

## Supporting Evidence

- Across a vast majority of classrooms, teacher practices consistently reflect and support school wide beliefs about how students learn best; teachers and administrators can articulate how the Danielson Framework for Teaching informs those beliefs and align with curricula. For example, the school believes that students learn best through activities that include multiple means of presentation and multiple means of expressions and engagement. In one classroom visit, students had a choice of different activities to choose from to show their understanding of the theme and gist of different stories which appealed to their interest.
- Instruction, outcomes, strategies, and learning activities derive from standards-based curricula and reflect school leadership's espoused beliefs about optimal student learning situations, such as students working on restating questions in their own words to generate the problem and solution in the story. Students worked in cooperative groups as the teacher facilitated throughout groups to help monitor understanding.
- Students across classrooms produce work and engage in discussions that reflect critical thinking, creativity, innovation, and problem solving, as well as student ownership of the learning process. Students in a seventh grade science class were balancing equations by using visual models or numeric representation. Each group used hands on materials, including white boards and color-coded table of elements charts to discuss differentiated and challenging activities in the integrated co-teaching class with mixed abilities.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms, there are multiple opportunities for student-to-student dialogue using academic vocabulary and evidence-based accountable talk built into lessons. Students can articulate what they are working towards, why it is important, and how they help determine the direction of the lessons. For example, in one student centered classroom, students used academic vocabulary and prior knowledge and research to organize and improve their own higher order thinking questions to develop the big picture surrounding topics related to women's history.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

The school consistently uses and adjusts curricula aligned assessment practices, grading policies and pedagogical strategies that focus on checks for understanding to create a clear portrait for students and staff regarding student achievement and progress towards mastery.

### **Impact**

School wide data driven decisions lead to rigorous curricula adjustments at the teacher team and classrooms levels, and student self-assessment tools guide instructional decisions and provide clear and actionable learning targets for all learners.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- A variety of feedback to students, from both teachers and peers, is accurate, specific, and timely, thereby advancing learning. For example, students receive feedback in the form of comments in notebooks, post-it notes rubrics for partners and included at the bottom of class activities as well as checklists to inform their work in math, science, and social studies.
- Teachers and administrators articulate coherent reasons for assessment choices, aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards in the curriculum. These choices deliver a range of data on a daily, monthly, or quarterly, basis to improve instruction. For example, the school triangulates data periodically from state scores, Scantron performance series testing, Measure of Student Learning (MOSL) performance tasks, Writing Reading Assessment Profiles (WRAP), running records, formative assessments (exit slips, quizzes, entrance tickets), GoMath! assessments, teacher created rubrics, and checklists to monitor student learning and progress.
- Students participate in a wide variety of self-assessment practices that include monitoring their own level of engagement in discussions, turn and talks, rubrics, checklists, peer feedback on writing samples, homework assignments, quizzes and tests.
- Teachers constantly “take the pulse” of their classes and make frequent use of strategies, including pulling small groups, questioning to explain or clarify, exit and entrance slips to elicit information about individual student understanding and trends in performance on a daily and weekly basis and they adjust instruction accordingly.