



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 325

Elementary School M325

**500 West 138 Street
Manhattan
NY 10031**

Principal: Gary Cruz

**Date of review: May 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell**

The School Context

P.S. 325 is an elementary school with 267 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 91% Hispanic, and 3% White. The student body includes 38% English language learners and 10% 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 90.9%.

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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership capacity.

Impact

Teacher teamwork typically results in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in grade teams weekly for a double period, and all teacher meetings are led by an instructional coach who designs agendas and establish protocols. In addition teachers also meet by vertical teams on Mondays. A review of team agendas and action plans revealed teams are focused on improving instructional practice connected to student learning needs. Teachers consistently share and collect best practices based on common assessments, create action plans for groups of students and design classroom modifications for instruction. For instance, teams analyzed baseline assessment data from English languages arts and mathematics, identified trends, designed interventions, and monitored progress of students.
- Teachers are identified for key areas and responsibilities to ensure the principal and assistant principal have accurate feedback from teachers on school initiatives and instructional foci. Leaders of teacher teams are also members of the school cabinet. Teachers stated that “In the cabinet we can talk to anyone, and they act as the middle man between the teachers and administrators.” Teachers feel empowered to speak up at their teacher meetings and know that their voice is being heard.
- Teachers were observed analyzing student work from a recent math assessment in a vertical team. Teachers discussed strengths and weaknesses of student answers and hypothesized causes for student’s misunderstandings connected to the curricula and classroom instruction. The team then collaborated on interventions and adjustments in the upcoming unit. The teacher team was able to demonstrate progress for the majority of students within the subgroups they were focused on throughout the school year.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms teachers were inconsistent in providing multiple entry points to the curricula and in engaging students in appropriately challenging tasks.

Impact

Across classrooms in student work products there is uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills, and discussions reflected uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, strategies to provide multiple entry points for a variety of learners were inconsistent. For instance, in a fifth grade English language arts classroom students were provided with video about recording animal life in the rainforest that was followed by students reading a transcript of the video. The transcript was broken into segments with some students receiving vocabulary support for the reading due to a high number of English language learners in the class. Students worked in groups to collect evidence from the text to identify the main idea of the material. However, in a second grade classroom lesson on the parts of plants students were expected to fill in a blank graphic organizer from memory with no additional supports either visual or textual thereby limiting students' ability to complete the task.
- In the majority of classrooms visited, teachers' oral questions and questions in student tasks were at a low level and limited student ability to demonstrate higher order thinking. For example, in a kindergarten math classroom students were organizing the numbers 1 through 20. The teacher displayed the numbers organized on the Smartboard and students were working in pairs to glue them on a piece of chart paper.
- Teachers in a few classrooms engaged students in rigorous tasks and challenging discussions. During a fifth grade math lesson student groups were collaborating on problem solving with fractions in which they had to represent their answer and reasoning in multiple ways. Students were expected to explain their thinking in writing, create a pie graph, and demonstrate their solution using expressions. Students shared their rationale with each and explained using appropriate academic vocabulary.

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, content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic task consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to build coherent curricula that promote college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks across grades and subjects consistently require students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills including students with disabilities and English language learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers collaboratively decided to invest in Common Core aligned curricula from Expeditionary learning in English language arts and Go Math! in mathematics. Teacher teams expanded resources in both curricula to better improve the Depth of Knowledge required in academic tasks. In mathematics teachers include resources from EngageNY to improve fluency practice and to build student capacity in applying multiple pathways to solving real world problem. In English language arts teachers created supplemental writing units and tasks which require students to create arguments supported by textual evidence.
- A review of unit plans and lessons plans across grades and subjects revealed that teachers consistently identify learning targets in the form of “I can” statements, create rigorous tasks that require students to demonstrate higher-order thinking, and build supports for different student groups into their planning. In a 4th grade cross-curricular unit students analyzed multiple authentic texts to create a claim about the role of religion in the America Colonies. Throughout the unit teachers planned vocabulary supports, graphical organizers, visual supports, and strategic student grouping based on skill proficiency to include all learners.
- In vertical teams, teachers have aligned standards to ensure consistent application of standards across grades and to prepare students to be college and career ready. For instance, teachers in English language arts used the NYC performance task and rubric as guides for aligning curricula tasks K-5. They created additional supports with their units for students with disabilities and English language learners both in materials, and instructional strategies that make the tasks more accessible.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teachers use rubric based assessments aligned to the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

Assessments in classrooms provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. The results of common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student portfolios in classrooms and during the student meeting revealed that they receive rubric-based feedback on performance assessments as well as standards based feedback from common assessments. Students receive a cover sheet for each subject area that tracks their progress and has short term and long term goals identified for students. During the student meeting students stated that they received rubrics prior to classroom tasks and used the rubrics to improve their projects. Students also stated that they used their portfolio, and most students could explain a skill they were trying to improve.
- The school uses Mastery Connect, an online assessment tool that not only provides standards analysis to the school-created exams, but also provides the school with consistent common assessment tools in mathematics to monitor progress. Teachers and school leaders recognized a need to include more rigorous problems within their mathematics curricula to supplement Go Math! and EngageNY resources. Teachers use the assessment data to monitor progress of their students and choose work to present at team meetings.
- The school has created writing performance tasks across grade levels and aligned them to the NYC performance task rubric to ensure accurate formative assessment results throughout the year. Teachers and school leaders analyze the results of the assessments by rubric elements to inform them of student progress as well as on the needs to make curricula adjustment. In particular, teachers planned supports in structure and conventions for their students.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide professional development aligned to those expectations. Schools leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to families.

Impact

The school's accountability systems ensure the entire staff is aligned with expectations. As a result of family communication and feedback, families understand their children's progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Four cycles of professional development per year are grounded in professional articles and research and connected to Danielson's Framework for Teaching and teacher observational data. Teacher improvement is monitored using the Advance web application to see teacher's improvement in Danielson subcomponents that were a part of professional development.
- Parents stated that they feel informed about their children's progress through Tuesday after school meetings, parent teacher conferences, progress reports, and Class Dojo. During parent teacher conferences teachers, at night and on Tuesday afternoons, teachers review student assessment results and share student goals with parents. The school began this year using Class Dojo to improve communication and has provided workshops to parents on how to use the program.
- The school partners with Fordham University to provide parent workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards and college and career readiness. Parents reported that they learned how to integrate mathematics with their children in everyday life and also how the expectations of Common Core has changed what their children should be able to do and explain.
- School leaders set clear expectations through the staff handbook and ongoing written communication regarding school goals. All teachers set short and long term goals connected to their observation feedback. A review of goal sheets showed teachers reflect on individual rubric components of Danielson's Framework for Teaching, and, together with school leaders, set priorities for their learning. There is also an intervisitation schedule that identifies a focus for each visit a teacher conducts and a reflection on observed practices.