



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Neighborhood School

Elementary School M363

**121 East 3rd Street
Manhattan
NY 10009**

Principal: Dyanthe Spielberg

**Date of review: April 1, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

The School Context

The Neighborhood School is an elementary school with 306 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 15% Black, 32% Hispanic, 44% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 29% 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 93.0%.

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	Well Developed
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	Proficient
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has established a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to staff and families on a path towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures for communication and collaboration result in mutual accountability for student achievement and school improvement.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations for staff are conveyed through the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition to observation and feedback cycles, teachers participate in regular peer inter-visitations and professional learning opportunities with their peers. In whole school and grade level collaborations, teachers share instructional practices and student work, receiving peer feedback that results in professional reflection and growth.
- High expectations are communicated to parents through curriculum night and monthly curriculum letters that inform parents of the expectations for each unit of study. Parents receive information on student progress towards grade level expectations through on-going conferences, student narratives, report cards and task feedback along with rubrics. At family conferences, students present work to their parents, bringing pieces they are proud of and identifying the strengths of the piece and their next learning steps. Parents express having a co-parenting relationship with the school, noting that the school is supportive of the whole child and focuses on social emotional as well as academic development.
- Teachers and families participate on multiple committees in a joint effort to bring new learning experiences into the school. In response to parent feedback requesting more STEM related after-school options, parents and teachers worked together to expand the chess program and bring in robotics and architecture. These committees have also accessed many grants including a forestry grant that supplements science instruction and provides a school-wide camping experience. Parents have worked with the school to expand access to such opportunities with the Parent Teacher Association providing funding so after-school opportunities can be provided to students at low or no cost.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect the belief that students learn best when they are engaged with rigorous content through project based units of study and have opportunities to make real world applications of information.

Impact

Across classrooms students were engaged in activities and discussions that promote high-level thinking and engagement with their peers. However, in some classrooms student ownership and quality of final work products were limited by instructional planning.

Supporting Evidence

- The neighborhood school has class configurations that place students in grade bands; 1/2, 2/3 and 4/5. However, students are streamed by grade level for math and flexibly grouped based on assessment results. In a grade 4/5 mathematics class, students worked on multiplying fractions. Students were asked to represent their thinking through multiple models and share their learning with their peers. At tables, students were able to share strategies that included number lines, repeated addition and the use of mathematics models. Work products in mathematics reflect students applying knowledge to real life situations such as needing to create a table for twenty-four people with specific measurements and space requirements or determining the cost of a school ice-skating trip.
- Early childhood students participating in an architecture study used observations to compare and contrast features of New York City buildings. Prior to working in pairs, they conducted an observation using an image of the Woolworth building, which they were scheduled to visit the next day, and their school building. Students explored vocabulary that included spire, pinnacle, façade, gargoyle, and arch.
- Students in a Grade 1/Grade 2 class engaged in guided group work with teachers determined by their reading profile needs. Small groups worked on decoding, fluency, and comprehension strategies.
- While it was clear that students engaged in extensive units of study of the Haudenosaune/Iroquois confederacy and the United States government, the final writing products did not reflect incorporation of research and prior learning that students had clearly engaged.
- Students in a grade 4/5 science class were working in a unit on circuits. Following a whole group meeting on the rug with some recall questions, the teacher sent students back to their table with three items. Students were told to use these items to create a working circuit with the goal of having the light bulb light. Students completed this activity in about thirty seconds but it was unclear what the next steps in this lesson were.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curriculum across grades and content is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and promotes college and career readiness. Rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills are embedded in the curriculum across grades and subject areas.

Impact

All students are supported in accessing and engaging in rigorous tasks and have multiple opportunities to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Neighborhood School is part of the Progressive Redesign for Schools of Excellence (PROSE). As part of PROSE teacher teams are involved in curriculum development. While the school utilizes Teachers College Reading and Writing Project framework to support literacy development, teachers also design cross content projects based units of study that allow students to explore content in multiple ways. For example, in an upper grade unit on Democracy in America, students explored local government through field trips and discussion, explored perspective on government issues in conversations with peers and parents, evaluated individual versus group needs, completed informational brochures on government branches and established their own political platforms which they presented to their peers. Teachers engage in professional learning with Reggio-Emelia in an effort to continually strengthen their project based designs to meet the needs of a diverse population of learners.
- In mathematics, teachers use Engage NY modules to provide instruction that focuses on fluency, accuracy and application. Across mathematics units, teachers have incorporated space for work with conjecture, leaving conjectures up as an ongoing opportunity for students to explore their thinking. In addition to scaffolding problems with less complex numbers and information, teachers have incorporated mathematics exploration through models and debate.
- The school focuses on promoting skills associated with college and career readiness by providing students the opportunity to engage in self-selected project based experiences two-three times each week. During these blocks students can select an area that they want to explore or extend their learning in a current unit of study. Students need to create a plan for their project supporting organization, persistence and self-monitoring. Throughout the school day students engage in collaborative group work with a focus on building communication and interpersonal relationships.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School-wide common assessments, including literacy profiles and rubrics, are used to establish expectations and determine student progress towards goals.

Impact

Summative and formative assessment data is used to adjust curricula and instruction and provides actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher’s College Reading and Writing student profile assessments are given three times a year. Profiles are used to determine instructional groupings during literacy blocks and to identify students who are not making progress for Response to Intervention supports. Profiles are shared and monitored during the student’s career at the school.
- In mathematics, students engage in performance tasks from Engage NY. Results are used to determine reteach needs for whole group and small group instruction and allow teachers to flexibly group students during math instruction.
- Rubrics are typically used for extended writing pieces and projects. Rubrics support students in understanding task expectations for structure and content. Rubrics are used for self-reflection, peer and teacher feedback. Teachers utilize performance data to determine students’ next steps and provide guided support during writing blocks.

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

All teachers are engaged in professional inquiry focused on student achievement and teacher development.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has strengthened both the instructional and leadership capacity of teachers impacting student learning school-wide.

Supporting Evidence

- Neighborhood School is part of the Progressive Redesign for Schools of Excellence (PROSE). Teachers lead the PROSE meeting around curriculum development, looking at student work, and examining instructional practice. As a result of this work teachers have increased peer inter-visitation opportunities and the use of video reviews to give each other feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers also utilize their Children’s First Network Support to provide professional development in co-teaching models, which they self and peer evaluate. The PROSE teams also participate in descriptive reviews of student work which includes student video as well as product samples.
- Teachers participate in collaborative planning by grade band and in mixed groups. The school librarian works with teacher teams and has participated in multiple city-wide professional development opportunities. It was noted several times the importance of this collaboration to teachers. EdMoto, which is a school centered social network was implemented, and allows teachers to share information with students and engage in ongoing conversations around units and projects. Teachers use this forum to give students links to supplemental materials, including “lib guides.” Through a partnership with the New York Public Library, teachers are able to borrow up to one hundred books at a time supporting student access to leveled materials within units of study. Additionally, apps for that support writing, illustrating, and voice recording have been shared and utilized. Students also engage in virtual book clubs.
- Teacher teams use Google docs to share instructional and student information. Student profiles are comprehensive, covering a student’s full enrollment period. All providers who work with students can add ‘kids notes’ to this document. Teachers and paraprofessionals can use this document to establish their inquiry focus which can focus on academic need as well as social emotional needs. Inquiry teams focus on how students process information, factors that inhibit certain students from socializing with their peers, multiple representations of information, and strategies that support special needs learners.