



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Castle Bridge

Elementary School M513

**560 West 169 Street
Manhattan
NY 10032**

Principal: Julia Zuckerman

**Date of review: March 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

Castle Bridge is an elementary school with 152 students from grade pre-k through grade 3. The school population comprises 12% Black, 63% Hispanic, 21% White, 2% Asian and 2% Multi-racial students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93%.

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	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The principal effectively communicates and provides multiple supports for attaining high expectations through learning partnerships between staff, parents and others across the school community.

Impact

Collaborations with stakeholders in and outside of the school community create a culture of shared accountability for high expectations that accelerates staff and student learning school-wide.

Supporting Evidence

- According to the principal, communication of high expectations for all staff begins before any teacher is hired and drives strategic selection of dual language licensed teachers, based on the school's mission and vision. The principal articulates and holds the entire school community accountable for high expectations, through faculty conferences, bulletins, individual and team discussions, and handouts that explicitly state expectations for teaching and learning grounded in the goal of developing the whole child. Teachers stated that high expectations result in constant collaborations amongst all members of the school community, via mandated as well as voluntary after school and weekend planning activities, all of which illustrate mutual accountability for these high expectations.
- Teachers note that they are supported in meeting the expectations, as they participate in a retreat, summer planning sessions and weekly professional development sessions on Mondays. For example a math and literacy consultant works with teachers to strengthen their understanding of individual students' needs, with targeted focus on one student at a time over an extended period of time. Teachers receive similar training in "Emotionally Responsive Practice", for collaborative problem solving and effective management of behaviors exhibited by students. Minutes of team meetings and Learning Partners intervisitation logs also illustrate the school's commitment to high expectations for professional learning, in keeping with the school's goals. Those records show that teachers are trained to focus on domains such as "Oral Language Development Strategies", the "Ten Stages of Reading" and how to differentiate "content and language for the diverse student population".
- Parents reported that they learn about expectations for their children through class visits, information sessions, one to one interviews with teachers, weekly letters from the school, Parent Teacher Association meetings and when they attend Friday Recitals with their children. They praised the school for maintaining an "open door" and the Tuesday conferences that help to keep them up to date on their children's developmental needs and progress in learning. One parent raved about the in-depth report that he gets about all aspects of his child's performance and another spoke of her child being the one to describe his performance during the conference with the teacher. Other parents added that a "Weekly Word from Julie" newsletter also keeps them informed about school events and expectations for their partnership in support of their children's growth as learners.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While there are some effective instructional practices in all classrooms, all students are not consistently immersed in challenging tasks that promote high levels of thinking and participation in learning.

Impact

Lessons do not yet engage all students in learning activities that foster higher order thinking and high levels of participation in discussions across content areas and grades.

Supporting Evidence

- During lessons viewed students were guided in high level learning activities such as conducting investigations in science, exploring multiple ways of finding solutions to math problems and editing their own writing in response to focus questions provided as feedback from the teacher to deepen their writing. A model of a bridge seen in one classroom and students who described their projects or participated in the Friday Recital, demonstrated student engagement in projects with connection to real life events. However, some lessons observed did not illustrate moves by teachers to customize tasks or content for students with diverse needs, including varied levels of language proficiency, in classes that all contain students across two grade levels.
- Some lessons facilitated student participation in tasks that involved and sustained student-to-student dialogue and student-generated questions. For example, in one class students presented their work to peers and fielded their questions about the work done in “Project Time”. Some teachers, including a teacher of second language learners, used scaffolding techniques, including the use of sentence strips and question stems, to promote vocabulary acquisition and push peer to peer talk. A similar pattern was noted in another classroom where students were engaged in responding to questions via a turn and talk activity. However in other classrooms, lessons consisted primarily of teacher-led talk, with limited opportunities for students to be highly engaged in demonstrations of their learning through discussions with peers.
- A few lessons showed tasks that allowed students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, to participate in text-based discussions and activities that evoked higher-order thinking. For example, a group of second and third grade students read and shared insights from their reading of different books. However, some tasks were of low demand, with students responding to questions by filling in short responses on worksheets or graphic organizers that did not require high level thinking related to the subject matter. Work products seen in student folders also did not consistently illustrate high levels of student thinking and participation across classrooms.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Using student work and data, the school has created and implemented curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, across grades and subjects. Unit maps illustrate a theme-based approach to the design of curricula and tasks for all learners.

Impact

All students have access to curricula designed to accelerate their learning via engaging tasks with cross disciplinary connections that promote coherence across the various instructional programs, and support students' readiness for the next grade.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's curricula is driven by an intentional focus on specific topics or themes through which teachers infuse tasks and content that "build a bridge" across grades and subject areas. For example, sample curriculum documents show that the current focus on bridges as the theme for this school year drives the design of tasks and selection of content for students' at all developmental levels. Units on the Civil Rights, a "Name study" unit and a unit involving investigations of snails and mealworms, show integration of content and tasks linked to the New York City scope and sequence guides for science and social studies instruction.
- The school's curricula illustrate targeted focus on the instructional shifts, with a biography unit for second and third grade students, and the entire school creating tasks as part of a "social justice curriculum", that invites a range of reading, writing, listening and speaking activities related to the instructional shifts (evidence, argument, opinion, claims and counterclaims). Units from Engage NY are used to support math instruction, with math manipulatives added to enable all students to access the curricula.
- Based on data from sources such as assessment profiles and New York City Learning Profiles for students, the school is currently engaged in expanding curricula to incorporate multiple levels of support for all students, particularly the many second language learners and students with disabilities enrolled in its dual language program. This includes translated versions of instructional materials and access to a literacy program that offers all students individualized reading and writing instruction. Collections of texts are included to allow for student engagement in daily reading at their independent level and to build their content knowledge around the theme being studied across content areas. Teachers examine student work daily, as part of their work in designing of tasks that are informed by data about the needs of each child.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has implemented an assessment system that provides staff and students with feedback about students' strengths and learning needs. Feedback from assessments informs instructional adjustments and promotes self-assessment by all students.

Impact

Data from a variety of assessments results in teachers pinpointing and addressing the learning needs of students and promotes students' understanding of next steps for progress in learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers use assessments that reflect the school's learning objectives and curricular focus. For example, after each instructional cycle of six weeks, teachers administer a math assessment aligned to Common Core Learning Standards to all students. Reading assessments are implemented daily via observations of independent and guided reading by all students. Teachers also assess students by listening to their presentations (a song or poem in English or Spanish) during a daily project time and during the school-wide weekly celebration of learning at Friday Recitals that all staff and some families attend. Other assessments such as Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System, EL SOL and Fountas and Pinnell Running Records are also administered as part of the school's focus on skills building for all learners.
- Teachers reported that they are required to use data from ongoing assessments to develop narrative profiles of each student's strengths and learning needs every six weeks, leading to staff sharing detailed written feedback with students and other staff. In addition, teachers' conferencing logs show that teachers constantly assess students' growth, particularly in areas such as math problem solving, phonemic awareness, encoding, decoding, sight word recognition and oral language acquisition, generating data to inform next steps for each learner. The principal used spreadsheets with students' levels of proficiency in reading to illustrate how data is used to flexibly group and/or re-group students for instruction based on areas of needs, as identified by item skills analysis of the assessments.
- Classroom practices showed use of varied methods of ongoing checks for understanding. For example in classrooms visited, the teachers constantly checked in on students, especially those who appeared to be having difficulty with the task, by making notes on clip boards and further clarifying what was expected. In addition, most lesson plans showed the use of ongoing assessment practices via questioning and sharing of ideas from group or partner work. Most of the students interviewed stated that they assess their own learning, as teachers ask them to talk about their work "all the time" and set goals with them. Some pointed to checklists in their portfolios and explained how they use the checklists to determine what they have to do to get a good score on their work. One added that she uses the checklists at home to tell her parents about her work.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All staff members regularly collaborate in sharing best practices to ensure increased teacher capacity in designing effective Common Core aligned instruction and accelerate all students' mastery of learning goals across content areas and grades.

Impact

The inclusion of all staff in a multitude of teams contributes to ongoing improvement in teacher practice and student achievement school-wide.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, inquiry teams meet weekly for two hours on Mondays and during common preparation periods in which they focus on the integration of the Common Core Learning Standards into units of study. This includes structured meetings for paraprofessionals as well as classroom teachers. Team configurations include teachers of students in grades 2 and 3 as one team and teachers of students in grades pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and 1 as a second team. The teams collaborate in reviewing curriculum guides, developing assessments and designing learning tasks, as they focus on what students need to know at each grade level. Teachers interviewed noted that this strengthens their practice by making them fully aware of skills and content applicable to the current and next grade for each student.
- The teacher team meeting observed showed that teacher teams conduct analysis of student work to identify students' strengths and areas of need based on skills taught and assessed. In addition, teachers stated that based on data from assessments they group students for varied class activities and re-group them as needed based on follow up assessments. The principal used sheets with data from a reading assessment to show improvement in levels of proficiency in reading for students in grades K -3, based on teacher follow up on instructional strategies and enrichment resources suggested by peers at team meetings. Minutes of team meetings also reference planned revisions of units and lesson content and delivery, based on data for individual and subgroups of students.
- At weekly grade or department meetings discussions of individual students as well as patterns and trends in learning related to a given skill, topic or assessment, enable teachers to determine next steps. Teachers take turns sharing ideas for improvement in their practice and students' mastery of learning goals. Assessment logs reflect findings and suggested next steps from analysis of student work and, according to teachers interviewed, result in evaluation of curriculum materials and identification of new resources to support the goal of ongoing improvement in staff and student achievement.
- In addition to meeting with school-based teams, teachers meet with teams from partner schools in the Department of Education's Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence and Learning Partners' programs that showcase collaborative practices across schools. These structures engage teachers in honing their pedagogical skills via intervisitations to view peers or receive feedback, including information on strategies and resources, from peers in schools with similar populations of dual language learners.