



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**PS 527 – East Side School for Social Action**

**Elementary 02M527**

**323 East 91 Street  
Manhattan  
NY, 10128**

**Principal: Daniel McCormick**

**Date of review: Nov 19, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Simmons**

## The School Context

PS 527 - East Side School for Social Action is an Elementary school with 158 students from K through grade 2. The school population comprises 3% Black, 13% Hispanic, 64% White, 18% Asian, and 2% other background students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 95%.

## 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>Celebration</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>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The principal and staff have developed engaging, rigorous curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts that offer meaningful learning experiences to improve achievement for all students.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Academic tasks push student thinking across grades and subjects.

### Supporting Evidence

- In English Language Arts, materials are leveled for guided and independent reading. In the morning, teachers start each day with shared reading, and use read alouds throughout the day. Writing units are created from Core Knowledge, Social Studies scope and sequence and Teachers' College units of study. As a result, 29% of at-risk students in Kindergarten in 2013-2014 improved at least 2 levels in their reading, and 62% of those at-risk students, now in 1st Grade, improved at least 2 levels in their reading, as measured by the Teachers College Reading Assessment.
- During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared their need to infuse vocabulary in the curricula. The selection of Core Knowledge supported that need by providing vocabulary building and comprehension skills through the listening and learning program. The incorporation of Word Study approaches based on Orton-Gillingham in kindergarten and Words Their Way in first and second grades provides explicit instruction in word building and language patterns.
- Teachers consistently refine academic tasks throughout to make sure all students can access the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Unit plans illustrate multiple scaffolds and entry points for all students. For example, math lesson plans show use of games, visual aids, manipulatives and graphic organizers.
- A variety of academic tasks, with multiple entry points, are provided to allow students to work in small groups and show various ways to solve a problem. Students use a variety of self-selected thinking maps to plan writing. From the classroom visits, it was evident that students are actively engaged in tasks aimed at challenging cognition and enhancing achievement.
- Across grade levels there is an emphasis on non-fiction reading and writing. Literacy curriculum maps include academic vocabulary as well as lists of appropriately complex texts that students will read throughout units of study. Curriculum maps and lesson plans also indicate that culminating unit tasks are differentiated and linked directly to their corresponding Depth of Knowledge level, thus providing opportunities for all students including special education students to demonstrate their understanding of content.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Although school leaders and faculty collect and analyze a wide range of data that identifies the needs of students and adjust instruction in order to improve student progress and performance, students were not aware of their next learning step, which hampers student autonomy and ownership.

### Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through data analysis as well as during instruction are used regularly to guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet on a weekly basis to analyze assessment results and student work, track individual student progress and adjust instructional plans and strategies to meet the specific needs of students. During the visit, the second grade teams analyzed On-Demand writing pieces for low, medium and high performing students using a mentor text, a rubric and the appropriate Common Core Learning Standard. The team shared strategies regarding how high achieving students can be supported to enhance their writing.
- Assessments collected by classroom teachers and the principal include: Teachers College Assessments, On Demand Writing; pre- and post- math assessments and student work.
- Across classrooms, teachers used varied ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment, such as peer feedback and questioning. However, during independent work time students relied on the teacher to evaluate their work and were not aware of their next learning step.
- Teachers from K-2 reviewed their curricula to see where they could incorporate strategies around writing so that students' skills in that area could strengthen over time.

## Additional Findings

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

Teacher teams engage in frequent structured collaborations to examine student work and make key decisions about curricula and teaching practices to support student learning.

### Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly in both vertical and horizontal teams to determine the efficacy of the units from one grade to another and to ensure their continued alignment to CCLS. Adoption of norms to examine student work during structured inquiry sessions has been recently established. Teachers state the collaborative process has also led to clarification around the use of rubrics to support student writing.
- Teacher team collaboration and conversations about student work result in changes to curricula, materials used and teacher’s classroom practices. Greater clarity of a performance tasks and removal of specific student scaffolds to increase student independence support student learning.
- Lead teachers at each grade level attend ongoing professional development sessions provided by the NYC Department of Education and guide the work of the teacher teams. Teacher–documented, low-inference observations of students guide teacher teamwork. Student work is reviewed and discussed; trends are examined, and recommendations are made about either teacher practice or curricula. For example, teachers have determined that guided reading must be a part of every instructional day.
- Teachers have embraced the opportunity to work collaboratively at looking at student work and tailoring both curricula and teacher practice to meet student needs. They state this process has allowed them to take ownership of designing units aligned to CCLS and has validated the contributions of all teachers. In response to the Learning Environment Survey (LES) results, school leaders have purposefully focused on empowering teachers and have encouraged them to take on leadership roles.

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

The school leader provides a consistent message of high expectations to staff, students and families, and provides on-going supports that ensure professionalism and student achievement.

### **Impact**

Structures that support the school's high expectations amongst staff, students and their families provide a clear trajectory towards elevated student achievement and college and career readiness.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The principal utilizes an inclusive approach to sharing expectations around the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers are given an opportunity to voice apprehensions about the evaluation process and to shape the approach the school would take to strengthening teacher understanding of the rubric. The principal and network provide extensive professional development to deepen teachers' understanding of the Danielson Framework for teaching.
- Families are an integral part of the school community and as such are included in discussions around the expectations the school sets for student achievement. For example, the school created a series of workshops to go deeper with the CCLS, Parents excitedly expressed they were able to understand their children's performance relative to the standards.
- Parents receive ongoing communication from the school about their children's progress and ways to support progress at home. For example, the principal and teachers send home newsletters explaining the literacy and mathematics instructional shifts to parents, along with suggestions about how to incorporate those shifts in everyday life.
- Parents expressed the principal is "wickedly smart" in business, forecast and budget. Additionally, the parents state the principal listens to them. As such, the incorporation of weekly appointments with the principal, Family Fridays, winter and spring festivals, creation of a new library, and student choice have created transparency and fostered love within the school community.
- Parents expressed that there is a true partnership between the families and school that allows parents to meaningfully support their child's education. The value of this partnership is additionally evidenced by the Learning Environment Survey where 97% of parents strongly agree or agree with the following statements: "My child's school has high expectations for my child," and "My child's school keeps me informed about my child's academic progress."

**Findings**

Teachers provide multiple entry points in the curricula for all learners, including relevant subgroups, so that higher-order thinking skills are evident in discussions and student work products.

**Impact**

Across classrooms, teachers use a variety of strategies to provide the means for all learners to complete meaningful work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In keeping with the school's belief of how students learn best, students engage in partner work, small group instruction, and independent practice. Active participation in hands-on activities, cooperative grouping, and opportunities to demonstrate learning are articulated beliefs about how students learn best. Lesson planning and classroom activities reflect a school-wide commitment to these beliefs.
- Teachers are involved in on-going discussions and professional development related to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers consistently use data to inform their own teaching practice as well as to differentiate tasks and groupings.
- Some classrooms are successfully integrating strategies to engage students in high levels of discussion and engagement during whole group lessons. Some classrooms rely on teacher directed conversations that limit students' ability to engage in meaningful discussions.
- Across classrooms, students worked in differentiated groups evidenced in guided reading and math lessons. For example, in a kindergarten class, students were divided by abilities, and learning objectives were tiered. Tier one students needed to combine 2 numbers to find a sum using the math machine and to solve number sentences using numbers up to 20. Tier 2 students needed to combine 2 numbers to find a sum using the math machine and to solve number sentences using numbers up to 12. Lastly, tier 3 students needed to combine 2 numbers to find a sum using the math machine and to solve number sentences using numbers up to 8.