



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**The Nathaniel Woodhull School
29Q035**

**191-02 90th Avenue
Queens
NY 11423**

Principal: Mark Dempsey

**Date of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Joseph O'Brien**

The School Context

The Nathaniel Woodhull is an elementary school with 648 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 40% Black, 26% Hispanic, 4% White, and 25% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

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	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently emphasize a culture of learning by communicating high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with parents.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability, collaboration, and buy-in is evident among all staff. School leaders and staff successively join with families to support student independence, progress and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are conveyed to staff through pre- and post- observations, meetings and weekly professional learning opportunities led by school administration, Children's First Network (CFN) support, and teacher leaders. The principal sends weekly reminders via emails to provide teachers with clear instructional and curricular expectations, and announcements.
- Advance data revealed that teachers struggled with Danielson component 3b: Questioning and Discussion Techniques, accountable talk, and aligning math units to the Common Core Learning Standards. Ongoing professional learning for teachers by teachers and school leaders in these areas occur at least once per week. Preliminary data in Advance reveal a 5% increase in teacher ratings for Danielson 3b: Questioning and Discussion Techniques.
- Families receive progress reports in January and May which detail progress in reading, writing, math, phonics, colors and shapes, and number recognition. Additionally, families receive teacher newsletters detailing upcoming units of study for each subject and grade, instructional tips, student reflections, excerpts of student writing and exemplary use of skills. Parent workshops are offered, such as: fostering effective communication skills, anti-bullying strategies, understanding the Common Core Learning Standards, and the importance of reading in the home. Resources are translated into French and Spanish.
- School leaders survey teachers each week to note students who have made the most progress and call their homes bi-monthly to share with families. Additionally, the principal reads and sings a story to each student on his/her birthday, reinforcing the theme that all students are respected and valued. The school hosts student celebrations for students and families, including student and writer of the month.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points for all students including English language learners and students with disabilities. Some student work products and some student discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Not all students are engaged in challenging tasks and do not consistently demonstrate their thinking and participation across all classrooms and in work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classes, students worked on one of three unique, tiered tasks using different resources ranging in difficulty. For example, in English language arts, students were given one of nine extension choices from a choice board. Selections included, "Write a sentence explaining the author's purpose", "Write about how bees work together as a community", and "How are worker bees alike and different?" However, multiple entry points are not yet integrated consistently and not all students were demonstrating their thinking. For example, in a grade 2 English as a second language class, levels of student engagement were mixed during peer collaborative activities on how to tell time.
- In some classrooms visited, student-to-student discussions were heard. For example, students discussed the writing of a compare and contrast essay, use of fraction mode comparison to identify equivalent fractions, and use of textual evidence to support claims and counterclaims. However, in the majority of classrooms equity of voice among students and teachers was mixed with some lost opportunities for non-volunteers to participate during class discussions and little wait time provided between questions, thus limiting student thinking and participation.
- Higher-order thinking questions are beginning to be included in some lessons. However, Webb's Depth of Knowledge level 3 or 4 questions were not yet consistently included in the majority of classes. Most lower level questions, such as: "What was your favorite part of the story?"; "Can you tell me the setting?"; "What makes people do the right thing?" were asked in classrooms.
- Student work products in writing were evident in three classrooms. In some classrooms, students' ability to cite textual evidence, complete multi-step word problems and use claim and counterclaim in essays were evident in student portfolios. However, in the majority of classrooms, evidence of student writing reflects uneven levels of student engagement and higher level thinking, or in many classrooms, there were no writing portfolios, and therefore, not consistent across grades and subjects.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school ensures that curricula is coherent across grades, promotes college and career readiness and is accessible to a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and teachers use Math in Focus and resources from Engage NY for math in grades K-5. In English language arts (ELA), teacher teams use Reading Street and school-wide writing to augment a teacher-designed curriculum that is used across subjects and grades. Lesson plans note rigorous tasks, skills and habits of mind including compare and contrast, habits of good readers, curriculum-aligned teaching points, academic vocabulary and Webb's Depth of Knowledge Level 3 and 4 questions.
- Teacher teams reviewed state English language arts exam item analyses data and determined that struggling students including English language learners and students with disabilities were having difficulty with Reading Street's text complexity. First grade teachers visited local public libraries to collect resources and simpler texts to scaffold reading instruction. Teachers designed additional resources including assessments, tasks and mini lessons so that students could build phonemic awareness, increase reading endurance, learn new vocabulary and increase comprehension skills.
- Curriculum maps denote access points for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, supports for English language learners include the use of visual aids and cues to increase student comprehension. Visual cues in Reading Street aid students in task comprehension, thus allowing for higher levels of engagement, deeper understanding of levels of meaning in a text, structure, language conventions and knowledge demands.
- Lesson plans illustrate multiple designs of academic tasks, with scaffolds and entry points for all students. For example, in English language arts, students are provided with common words, such as "both, too, but, and different" that are used to compare and contrast. Plans also call for graphic organizers to aid in compare/contrast exercises.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teacher teams analyze student data to create assessments, rubrics, checklists that are aligned with the school’s curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

School-wide assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and are used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction at the teacher team and classroom levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams develop Common Core-aligned assessments, rubrics, checklists, protocols and grading policies across grades and subjects. Teams meet at least once per week to revise unit maps and assessment and to discuss gaps in instruction between grades. For example, teams analyzed third grade student writing and noticed students needed additional support with complex sentences. Additional lessons and scaffolds including sentence strips and paragraph sandwich graphic organizers were implemented and current classroom data reveal an increase in quality of third grade student writing.
- New York State (NYS) assessment item analyses data is analyzed and students who need additional support in grades 3 to 5 are programmed for a ten week Saturday Academy with 11 teachers providing support in English language arts and math. Over 125 students attend each Saturday and teachers provide targeted supports based on assessment data to better prepare these students in literacy and numeracy.
- The school designed “Analyzing Classroom and Student Data” worksheets that teachers use to document and track student progress in specific standards, areas of strength and challenges, interpretations, implications and next steps. This data is then shared at team meetings, noticing trends in order to make informed curricular and student grouping decisions across grades.
- Teacher teams meet at least once per week to look at student work and to gauge the effectiveness of reading, writing and math instruction. In turn, instruction and assessments are realigned on an ongoing basis to best meet students’ needs and promote student ownership of learning and growth. For example, teacher teams meet to discuss student work products and to identify ways to modify instruction to best meet the needs of all students. After reviewing the data, grade four teachers noted that students were struggling with fractions. Additional lessons using manipulatives and fraction strips were added to support student learning.
- Teachers determine student progress by formally assessing students using running records Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), school-based quarterly benchmarks in math and English language arts, New York City pre- and post-assessments, State exam item analyses, unit tasks and writing responses, exit slips, guided reading and writing conference notes and Math in Focus unit exams (pre-k to 5).

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

Structured professional collaborations strengthen teacher capacity and progress toward mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and the administration created the Professional Learning Committee and conducted an anonymous survey to determine teacher choices for professional learning. The Committee reviewed the survey data along with teacher observation data from Advance to design the professional learning calendar. Topics include Danielson 3b: questioning and discussion techniques and Danielson 1e: planning and preparation. School leaders and teachers lead professional learning sessions known as Marvelous Mondays each week.
- The majority of teachers serve on inquiry teams known as Affinity Groups and participates in the analyses of data that lead to adaptations and refinement to curricula and foster improvements in instructional practice. Teams meet at least once per week to engage in four week inquiry cycles, adapt curricular resources including tasks and rubrics, and engage in student data analyses. This month, teachers reviewed instructional videos on questioning and discussion techniques and noted the value of the use of wait time and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge levels in questioning.
- Teacher teams create assessments, tasks, rubrics, protocols and curricular adaptations and extensions for all students including English language learners and students with disabilities. In addition, they analyze key elements of instruction and note implications and revise curricula to better meet the needs of all students, especially English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, grade 3 math teams noted that these groups of students struggled with using bar models. Teachers created mini- lessons and student tasks which used three dimensional manipulatives, two-dimensional drawings and a one dimensional formula to assist students in their conceptual understanding in math.
- Teacher teams noted that English language learners struggled in writing. In response, teams designed visual cues and redesigned tasks and supports to include a graphic organizer tailored to assist these students in finding textual evidence and using it in an essay.