



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Samuel Huntington

Elementary School Q040

**109-20 Union Hall Street
Queens
NY 11433**

Principal: Alison Branker

**Date of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shirley Wheeler-Massey**

The School Context

P.S. 40 is an elementary school with 578 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 61% Black, 24% Hispanic, 5% White, 1% Asian and 9% Multi-racial students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 9% 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 90.3%.

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 convey high expectations to the entire staff through ongoing feedback, support structures and professional learning opportunities. The school partners with families to position students on a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

The communication of high expectations has led to all stakeholders taking responsibility to support all learners within the school community in their efforts to make progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- At the start of the school year, school leaders provide staff with a handbook that outlines the non-negotiables related to instructional expectations, curriculum and lesson planning, student support and overall professionalism expectations. In review of the previous year's Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) ratings, school leaders developed a weekly, tiered differentiated professional learning plan, aligned to specific Danielson Framework for Teaching components. Small groups of teachers are provided with targeted workshops, facilitated by teacher leaders, in support of areas identified as "developing" from informal and formal observations. Administrators follow-up with teachers after classroom visits to provide specific feedback and detailed next steps for improving practice, along with resources, such as an on-line professional learning site, which provides differentiated sessions aligned to Danielson's Framework for Teaching components.
- New teachers and those in need of additional support are provided with one-to-one coaching or mentoring from instructional coaches and teachers who have been identified as "highly-effective" in a specific Danielson domain, which is posted outside of highly-effective teachers' classroom doors. These teachers are provided with daily in-class support from teacher leaders and are assigned to observe other teachers who are considered "experts" in that domain. Through a six week coaching cycle, instructional coaches provide identified teachers with feedback, often followed by a series of modeling sessions and then follow-up visits to observe and monitor if practices have improved. Similarly, teachers who are interested in honing their craft initiate their own inter-visitations to their colleagues' classrooms to observe best practices and to develop additional teaching strategies.
- The school has partnered with families to provide support for their own growth and understanding of the Common Core by offering weekly workshops for parents aligned to the standards focused on reading and math skills. Additionally, the school sponsors a monthly Open Classroom, where parents are encouraged to visit their child's classroom to observe teaching practices in order to obtain strategies to support their own understanding of the new standards and to better assist their children at home. In an effort to encourage students and prepare them for college and career, the school collaborates with families and parent members on the School Leadership Team to sponsor trips to local universities. During these visits, students are exposed to college life, which aligns with their learning within the school's monthly college focus from the *National Office School Counselor Advocacy (NOSCA's) Eight Components of College and Career Readiness* curriculum.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices inconsistently reflect the use of multiple entry points, targeted scaffolds, questioning and discussion strategies that encourage student discussions that support student learning and thinking.

Impact

Inconsistent teaching strategies have led to uneven opportunities for students to demonstrate high level thinking during discussions and within their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Through a close review of MOTP and assessment data, school leaders decided to focus on Danielson’s Framework for Teaching “Questioning and Discussion Techniques” as a springboard to support student learning. Teachers have received professional development aligned to this area of focus, with ongoing support and feedback from administrators and instructional coaches. However, across classroom visits, teacher questioning and strategies to engage students in discussions that allowed for critical thinking was not always evident. For example, one teacher posed the open-ended question, “Think of highways and bridges and the electricity that runs through them, explain what would happen if there was a gap within them?” Students then turned and spoke to a partner about what they believed would occur and then shared their thoughts within the larger group. In another class, the teacher modeled for ten minutes how to divide single digit numbers without providing opportunity for discussion or student-to-student interaction. Students responded to questions such as, “How many groups of five do we have?” and “How many eggs is that?” and the teacher modeled how they would arrive at the correct answer on the interactive white board without allowing any students to demonstrate their understanding of the concept.
- Across classrooms visited, some students were provided scaffolded supports, such as graphic organizers and math manipulatives, as well as multiple entries into lessons, while other students were provided limited supports to engage in academic tasks. For instance, in one math class, some students viewed videos before engaging in differentiated, real world math problems, based on formative data and students’ diverse needs. Students worked within partnerships and small groups to solve problems and explain their different strategies and approaches to solving the problems. However, in another classroom, students worked individually or in small groups on the same task across all groups with scaffolds that did not meet their specific needs, and resulted in many students having challenges completing the task and some unable to explain the expectation for the task or their approaches to develop representations of their work.
- In some classrooms, students were provided opportunities to turn and talk to their partner or within small groups, while others sat passively within classrooms and copied information from the board. For example, in one classroom, a student partnership engaged in a discussion around why a given answer or strategy within the activity was incorrect, while in another room, students completed a “Do Now” assignment and copied the teaching point from the board without having any opportunities to share their approaches to problems or their understanding of the problems presented.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Teacher teams plan and refine curricula and academic tasks based on student work and data.

Impact

Collaborative decisions around curricula development and refinement have resulted in instructional coherence across grades and all students having opportunities to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Through the use of Math in Focus, the school's math program, and the Core Knowledge Language Arts program, which embeds science and social studies content, teachers across all grades are exposing students to the instructional shifts such as citing evidence to support a claim, solving real-world math problems, building more math and reading fluency and increasing student exposure to informational text. For example, in grade 4, students are expected to explain how using place value can help them in the real-world and use objects, words and symbols to represent various numbers. Within the same unit, students are reading text that relate to the unit, such as *The Grapes of Math*, and will create and solve riddles using factors and number multiples. For science, students will list different foods of their choice, explore the caloric content of each and estimate their intake if consumed for three days consecutively.
- Curricular documents and most teachers' lesson plans reflect the planning for diverse students, such as English Language Learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, struggling and talented and gifted students, along with exposure to appropriate academic vocabulary and real world career links through NOSCA's *Eight Components of College and Career Readiness Counseling* curriculum. Within plans, academic tasks are structured so that students are exposed to the same content, but through different approaches, in an attempt to meet their individual or diverse needs. For example, in a science lesson plan, the teacher planned to have students with disabilities and ELLs work within partnerships to create posters that demonstrate differences between static and current electricity, grade-level students were to create list of ways to use electricity and explain what would happen without electricity, and high achievers were to research and gather information on the inventor of the light bulb and share their knowledge with their classmates.
- During grade and vertical teacher teams, teachers look at student work and data to backwards plan and refine Performance Based Assessments, curricula and academic tasks. For example, based on last spring's state English language arts (ELA) and math data, the school realized they needed more focus on instructional shift three to build in more opportunities for math fluency and shift five, allowing students to make real world connections and apply appropriate strategies in completing tasks. Across the school, grade teams modified their unit plans from last year to include these shifts in order to ensure exposure and opportunity for students to practice and apply these skills across content areas.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers use a variety of assessment practices, rubrics, and a grading policy that are aligned to the school's curricula.

Impact

The use of varied assessment strategies has allowed teachers to make effective instructional adjustments and provide students with actionable feedback and opportunities to be self-reflective.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers use Fountas and Pinnell running records, unit assessments, and performance tasks for ELA and math to identify where students are, to determine next steps for support and to create flexible groups. Teachers also utilize standards-based rubrics, which align to the levels within the school's grading policy, in order to provide students actionable feedback on their writing and performance tasks, which informs them of their strengths and next steps for improvement.
- In review of student work products throughout the school, there is evidence that teachers provide students detailed and specific feedback that is aligned to tasks and the standards, with clear guidance on how to improve their work. Additionally, prior to submitting their work to teachers, students are provided the opportunity to use the rubric to reflect on their work using a student-friendly checklist that outlines whether they met the requirements of the task and rate themselves accordingly. Similarly, after self-reflecting, students work with their partners or math buddies to engage in a round of peer-assessing in order to give each other feedback that is expected to be used to address identified issues within writing, as well in future writing or performance tasks.
- During visits to classrooms, teachers were consistently checking for understanding through questioning and follow-ups such as "how do you know" and "why". Teachers were also observed conferring with small groups or individual students, using checklist to track student responses and understanding, as well as exit slips to determine what was learned at the close of lessons. Students were also observed in small groups based on data, and in some instances provided with tasks based on data from previous lessons. In some classrooms, teachers were observed making on-the-spot adjustments to instruction based on students' misconceptions or errors. For example, in one classroom, the teacher observed a small group of students struggling with a noun worksheet, pulled them back together to review how to identify nouns and then conferred with individual students who continued to struggle. In another classroom, a teacher observed that some of her 5th grade students who were discussing the problems in partnerships were unclear about some of the concepts around multiplying mixed and whole numbers and made a mid-lesson interruption to clarify and to review the steps to provide more context for understanding. The students who continued to experience difficulties with the problems were provided with additional support as the teacher circulated to individual students, while noting the information on her checklist.

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

Through inquiry-based professional collaborations, the majority of teachers analyze student work and assessment data and share best teaching practices.

Impact

Professional collaborations have provided opportunities for teachers to hone their skills, which have resulted in improvements in student learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- On a weekly basis, teachers meet within horizontal or vertical teams to look at student writing or data to identify gaps in learning or practice, which informs their next curricular or instructional decisions. This year, the school decided they would use the backwards planning model to make curricular, instructional or assessment decisions. Within this model, teachers look at performance tasks or assessments to determine how they will approach teaching of a specific skill or concept. Collectively, teachers decide whether students have the skill-sets to be successful with the task and subsequently make revisions to instruction or the assessment. During team meetings, teachers are developing lessons and curricula with special emphasis on the school's instructional goal of improving teachers' and students' questioning and discussion techniques.
- During an observed meeting, 4th grade teachers were using a modified Looking at Student Work protocol to analyze one student's math performance tasks. Teachers discussed the strengths of the student's work and identified the gaps in understanding. The presenting teacher reflected on her approach to teaching the concept of dividing and multiplying fractions and shared ways in which she would adjust her practice or utilize different strategies to support the different learners within her classroom. Other teachers shared their challenges with teaching the same concept and collectively agreed they would visit another teacher on the grade who has had success teaching the same concept. Teachers expressed that having the opportunity to collaborate on a weekly basis and freely visit each other's classrooms has improved their practice and provided them with additional strategies and tools to better support their diverse learners.
- Ongoing discussions among colleagues on and across grades within the various inquiry teams, such as the Response to Intervention (RTI) team and the professional development team has allowed teachers to focus on students' specific academic needs. Within these teams, teachers plan RTI strategies and lessons, as well as share ways in which they can support tier 2 and tier 3 students. Based on assessment data, students are supported through flexible groups that are facilitated by the instructional coaches and RTI specialist. Teachers shared that they are consistently reviewing and analyzing data to inform their flexible groups and have noticed that grade 2 students who receive RTI services have made progress within reading as a result of one of the phonics programs they have been using to improve phonemic awareness and reading fluency.