



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**P.S. 41 The Crocheron School**

**Elementary 26Q041**

**214-43 35 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11361**

**Principal: Sari Latto**

**Date of review: January 28, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Danielle Giunta**

## The School Context

The Crocheron School is an elementary school with 560 students from grade k through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 18% Hispanic, 34% White, and 44% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.2%.

## 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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Across the majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of on-going checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement so that teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students learning needs and students are aware of their next steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- In collaboration with the school-based Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) Committee, school leaders have made strategic MoSL selections which are aligned to their instructional focus (writing), curricula and yield important data which is used to make adjustments to curricula as well as to plan for small groups. Additionally, the school has embedded an additional interim MoSL assessment, above and beyond expectations, which provides school leaders, teachers, students and families with invaluable information regarding student progress made towards end-of-year targets. This practice of embedding benchmark assessments across the year is consistent in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, school leaders, grade level teams and individual teachers are able to analyze data at the school, grade and classroom level leading to a clear portrait of student mastery and enabling teachers and students to engage in an actionable and meaningful feedback loop.
- Classroom teachers regularly engage students in peer- and self-assessment resulting in students becoming highly reflective and articulate about their own learning. For example, in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom, students were partnered to peer-assess a math Exemplars task. Each partnership was provided a copy of the Exemplars rubric. In one partnership Student A agreed with Student B that he did not deserve a level 4; however, Student A disagreed with the rationale of his partner citing it was not that he did not check his work closely, but that he needed to have explained his answer more clearly. This level of reflective conversation was consistent across all student partnerships.
- Across teacher teams, teachers are developing a variety of tools and resources to deepen their use of on-going checks for understanding. Examples include; 3-2-1 Exit Slip Notebook in which students reflect at the end of a lesson on one thing they learned, a question they still have and a connection they can make. An Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) partnership is using iPads to capture conference notes that they can share and use at the end of each lesson to make adjustments to groups and learning activities.
- During the student meeting, students shared that clear expectations have led to increased performance on tasks. For example, students shared how they receive unit/task rubrics at the beginning of a unit/task to help them plan for success. Students shared, "having the rubric lets me know exactly what I need to do to get a level 4." Additionally, students articulated receiving ample feedback from their teachers and peers which has helped them understand expectations and led to revisions in their work. Students are keenly aware of their goals, from kindergarten-grade 5, and the work they are focused on to achieve them.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Across the majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Classrooms reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

### Impact

Instructional coherence, across all classrooms and grades, is evidenced by high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership in student-to-student discussions and work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers incorporate different protocols for engaging students in high levels of discussion as they continue to refine their practices in this area. One protocol, developed in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade and growing across the school, is referred to as the “chime in” protocol. In this protocol, students engage in a student-facilitated conversation drawing on a sophisticated list of conversational prompts which has moved the school beyond, “agree-disagree” to students using phrases such as; “Can you clarify” and “I’d like to expand on...” In the 4<sup>th</sup> grade class where the ICT teachers developed this protocol, the teachers employ non-verbal cues, such as eye contact and a hand motion, to ensure the conversation moves along and students know when to wrap up a thought. School leaders acknowledge the high levels of thinking in student work and discussions are pervasive in the upper grades, and leverage these teachers to facilitate professional learning and open classrooms to further strengthen the level of energy/innovation in the lower grades.
- School leaders believe children learn best when they have access to the curricula through multiple entry points, tools to support them and opportunities for expression. To this end, school leaders have prioritized providing feedback using Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (FfT) in components 3B: Questioning and Discussion and 3C: Engaging Students in Learning in all observation feedback conferences. As a result of strategically prioritizing these components, school leaders see improvements in teacher practice and effectiveness in these two components, and continue to focus on lifting the effectiveness in these areas.
- High levels of student thinking are captured through the school-wide implementation of Thinking Maps. Teachers regularly incorporate the use of Thinking Maps as an instructional tool for students to organize information and ideas. Additionally, teachers use Thinking Maps to assess student thinking as a form of on-going checks for understanding. Thinking Maps are used as a form of differentiation in which students are able to make decisions on which Thinking Map would best reflect the type of thinking a task is requiring of them such as: brainstorming, describing, organizing, making connections/seeing relationships, and more. For example, in a fourth grade social studies lesson on the Revolutionary War, students created a thinking map to organize text-based evidence in preparation for a class debate on whether the patriots or loyalists had an advantage. As students created their maps, teachers were able to assess student thinking and provide focused feedback.
- Across all grades, including kindergarten, students are invited to collaborate and/or share work products to support peer- and self-reflection. For example, in one kindergarten class visited, for a mid-writing workshop interruption, the teacher prompted students to share their writing with a partner. Partner A read her writing and Partner B gave advice for adding more information. Partners made revisions on the spot.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and strategically integrate instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Curricula coherence is evident across grades and subject areas and individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest- achieving students, English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school is in their second year fully incorporating ReadyGen and Go Math! as their core English Language Arts (ELA) and math programs. A careful analysis of the programs in the first year revealed gaps between their core programs and the school's instructional focus on lifting the level of student writing. In an effort to support lifting the level of writing in ELA and math the school is incorporating the Teacher's College Reading and Writing units of study in writing modules as well as Exemplars in math which ample opportunities for students to expand on their ideas through writing. Additionally, to ensure all students have access to standards-based curricula, teachers seek out parallel texts so that students are held to the same standards and "big ideas" while accessing content through appropriately leveled materials.
- To ensure coherency at the grade level, teachers regularly plan together during designated teacher team times and scheduled common preparation times. To extend coherency across grades, school leaders have scheduled a minimum of three times a year for teachers to meet vertically to share the expectations of each grade level. Teachers value these vertical meetings as an opportunity to adjust curriculum at the planning stage to ensure students are entering the next grade prepared. Teachers cited the most critical meeting is the one which takes place in June strategically scheduled as the kick-off for June planning. As a result of this practice, school leaders and teachers are noticing a decrease in the need to plan for remediation and/or repeated teaching into skills. For example, in the past, fifth grade teachers needed to plan for an introduction to using a protractor. Through sharing of standard-bearing expectations, the protractor is introduced deeply in the fourth grade allowing fifth grade teachers to eliminate the need to plan introductory lessons.
- The staff uses DropBox and Google Drive as a place for sharing unit and curricula plans. Teachers add modifications and notes onto the lessons for their colleagues to see. In one example, a teacher added notes about what went well in a lesson and added adjustments for what could have led to the lesson having a stronger impact noting an area where students could be engaged in a more independent activity. A grade level colleague utilized these recommended adjustments when planning to implement the same lesson by planning for students to use a Thinking Map of their choice to answer a higher-order question.

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teaching and learning connected to pathways towards college and career readiness and successfully partners with families.

### Impact

Families participate in a culture of high expectations that deepens their understanding of college and career readiness skills and involves them in actively supporting their children in achieving success. High expectations are consistently communicated resulting in a culture of mutual accountability and improved learning outcomes for adults and students.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders are highly regarded by students, families and staff and recognized for having an “open door” and “open mind” policy. High levels of trust allow all stakeholders to feel safe in sharing ideas, posing solutions to problems, contributing to the overall vision of the school and taking leadership in initiatives which lead to school improvement. In the parent meeting, parents shared how the principal was open to the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) hosting the annual Career Day event. Allowing the PTA to take leadership on the event resulted in extraordinary experiences for the community and, most importantly, for the students who have had the opportunity to learn from a celebrity chef on the Food Network, Editor of the Queens Gazette and this year from Congresswoman Grace Meng. Parents shared how this one event led to the creation and implementation of the PS 41 Criminal Law Symposium and Mock Trial. Born out of a realization for the amount of PS 41 parents serving in law enforcement, one parent facilitating the career day realized students would benefit from a deeper understanding of the criminal justice system to appreciate the career choices of their parents. After developing a curriculum, parents presented their ideas to the principal who, in turn, supported the implementation of this new program. Parents cite an increase of respect amongst the community for the criminal justice system as well as an invaluable opportunity to bring the social studies curriculum to life.
- School leaders consistently communicate high levels of expectation around professionalism and instruction by strategically leveraging feedback to teachers in key areas which capture the school’s core beliefs in how students learn best. Teachers regularly receive feedback on classroom practice with an emphasis on Danielson’s Framework for Teaching components on questioning, discussion and engagement (3B and 3C). Additionally, school leaders regularly attend teacher team meetings and provide feedback at the team level to ensure both teacher practice and student outcomes are advancing.
- Teachers feel a mutual accountability in meeting and contributing to the expectations and vision of the school leaders. Teachers invite school leaders into their classrooms to provide feedback focused on new practices they are implementing, such as a “chime in” protocol and use of the iPad for conferring. As a result of feedback they receive, teachers have strengthened their practice and facilitated professional learning opportunities to share their work with the larger community and/or invite colleagues in to provide peer feedback. This practice has led to coherence across the school.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations and distributed leadership structures are embedded.

### Impact

Professional collaborations have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are an embedded and critical system in place to unpack, organize and plan for the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts and use of data to inform instruction and are organized around the school’s instructional focus on writing. School leaders have organized the schedule to provide ample times for teacher teams to meet through common planning periods. Dedicated time for teacher teams to meet is scheduled on the third and fourth Tuesday afternoon of each month. During this time, teachers analyze student work, create and revise rubrics and reflect on teaching strategies and practices. A vertical team meets a minimum of three times per year to share planning and student performance trends so that teachers develop a deeper sense of student needs and teachers can focus their efforts at the grades below and above.
- Teachers arrive to their team meetings with a clear focus captured through an agenda focused on examining student work through a long-term case study on selected students at various levels. In the 4th grade team, teachers projected the work of an academically struggling student onto a wall, extrapolated their noticings followed by brainstorming next steps to support student learning. During this specific case study, the teacher team determined the need to focus on transitional phrases in writing. As a result of this case study, teachers cited the student has made significant progress from the baseline Measure of Student Learning (MoSL) assessment to the interim MoSL assessment in which the student moved from 2 points in the baseline to 14.5 out of 28 possible points. Concluding this case study, the teacher team determined the next strategy to ensure further progress for this specific child as well as for groups of children performing at the same level.
- Through the targeted work of teacher teams, high levels of trust and a mutual accountability, teachers have played integral roles in key decisions that affect student learning with an emphasis on curricula choices and adjustments. After the first year of implementing ReadyGen, kindergarten teachers expressed a concern regarding the selection of texts, tasks and lack of authentic writing opportunities. Kindergarten teachers presented their findings to school leaders which resulted in a shift in texts and implementation of the TCRWP writing units of study. Another gap that surfaced for K-2 teachers was a lack of foundational skills provided in the core ELA program. As a result, grades K and 1 have incorporated Foundations and grade 2 is using Words Their Way.
- During both teacher teams visited, teachers recognized participation on a teacher team(s) has pushed their practice. One teacher stated, “[Working on a Teacher Team] helps me think about my students and look at their work through multiple perspectives.” School leaders cited how the teacher teams have led to greater alignment in teacher-created rubrics, and improvements in writing and discussion abilities of all students.