



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Public School 43

Elementary-Middle School Q043

**160 Beach 29 Street
Queens
NY 11691**

Principal: Gary Fairweather

**Date of review: April 30, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shirley Wheeler-Massey**

The School Context

PS/MS 43 is an elementary-middle school with 981 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 60% Black, 31% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian and 3% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.6%.

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	Developing
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	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional learning teams to look at student work and to share best practices. Distributive leadership structures provide opportunities for teacher voice in key decision-making.

Impact

Teacher collaboration and leadership opportunities result in the strengthening of instructional capacity and teacher participation in curricula and resource selections that support student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade and vertical teams meet weekly during common planning periods and after-school to analyze student work, to share best practices and to develop strategies and scaffolds to support student learning. During team meetings, each grade utilizes a tool that combines the Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional (ORID) and ATLAS protocols for inquiry work, along with an “inquiry and next step log”, which outlines student artifacts, their inquiry objective, reflections, interpretation and the team’s next steps. School-wide team meetings that occur during Monday professional learning time include a weekly focus on grade and vertical inquiry work, the modeling of best practices, discussing problems of practice and opportunities for teachers to view various webinars selected by school leaders.
- During a 6th grade team meeting, teachers discussed their findings from previously analyzed student writing which revealed that students were having challenges with attention to precision. They collectively developed tools and scaffolds, such as a pro and con graphic organizer and sentence starters. As part of the inquiry process, one teacher presented the work of a student who has ongoing challenges with writing. She shared previous writing tasks completed by the student and a recent writing assignment that included the student’s use of the team-created graphic organizers and writing supports. Each teacher reviewed and shared their noticings and determined that the student had demonstrated growth in including accurate and cite-specific evidence. Teachers shared that they also utilized similar writing supports with their students and noticed improvement in their inclusion of more accurate details in their writing. Various team members articulated that the ongoing collaboration within their team has allowed them to hone their practices and become more reflective as they develop strategies to better support their students.
- Each grade is supported by a grade leader who represents and shares ideas of their team within the vertical team. This team is responsible for looking at trends and patterns across the grades and to collectively develop action plans to address gaps in learning. As a team, they noticed challenges with middle school students adapting to the new math program and felt the need to shift to the GoMath program being utilized within the lower grades, to begin building coherency across the grades and to address students’ needs. One math teacher shared how he noticed students are more engaged with the math and are now taking advantage of the various online resources available from this program. In addition, members from this team are also provided opportunities to attend off-site technology trainings and to turnkey to other staff to ensure effective instructional technology strategies are being utilized across classrooms, as this is one of the school’s foci for the year.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teaching practices are beginning to reflect a common belief about student learning which are aligned to the curricula and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points and scaffolds to address student learning needs.

Impact

Varying teaching practices and strategies have resulted in inconsistent opportunities for all students to be exposed to the instructional shifts and engage in appropriately stimulating tasks that allow them to demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- This year the school is focusing on improving their instructional technology practices as well as increasing student engagement. Teachers have been provided professional development aligned to both foci and are working to refine their teaching practices aligned to these goals. While across classrooms visited, there was evidence of some teachers effectively utilizing technology to support student learning and providing opportunities to engage students throughout lessons, this was not a consistent practice. For example, during a 4th grade social studies lesson, students worked in small groups to discuss their ideas related to the American Revolution and those gathered from a previously observed video “*No More Kings*” and utilized laptops to research the topic in support of their group’s presentation. Conversely, during a middle school math lesson, students discussed, within a whole group, how to solve a math problem which was posted on the SMARTBoard, however, students were not provided an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the task at the SMARTBoard nor were they encouraged to discuss their solutions with their peers.
- During visits to classrooms, some teachers were observed providing scaffolds and multiple entry points to support students as they engaged in appropriately matched tasks, however there were instances where students worked on the same tasks as their peers and either struggled to complete the activity or finished quickly and waited for the rest of the class to reconvene for whole group work. For example, during a third and fourth grade self-contained math lesson, students were provided various opportunities to engage with the content on differentiated tasks using protractors, iPads and laptops which contained visual supports and aids that allowed students to explore measuring angles within different shapes. However, during a first grade writing lesson, all students worked independently on writing concluding sentences with only a model on a teacher-chart. Many students were observed struggling without supports such as sentence starters or vocabulary words, which prevented them from successfully completing the tasks, while those that did sit and simply waited for the teacher to confer with them about their work.
- While some teachers provided opportunities for students to annotate text, cite evidence to support claims and engage in debates or work through real-world tasks, there were missed opportunities for students to employ these skills during independent or group work. For instance, grade 6 students read and annotated various non-fiction articles and developed questions that required their peers to respond using text evidence. However, grade 2 English language learners struggling to understand the plant life cycle were not provided visual aids, such as plants or other supports that allowed them to connect the concepts of the lesson to the real world of plants and living things.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is utilizing resources and programs aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and in the process of creating its own curricula in connection to selected programs. Teacher plans and some tasks reflect planning to provide students access to lessons and tasks.

Impact

The school's curricula and resource decisions are beginning to provide opportunities for students to be exposed to the instructional shifts and participate in learning experiences that cognitively engage a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across the school are utilizing the Ready Gen reading program from grades K-5, Code X in grades 6-8, Go Math in all grades and the New York State scope and sequence for social studies and science. Through the use of these programs, teachers are exposing students to some of the instructional shifts such as more informational text, using text-evidence to support claims within written and verbal responses and building coherency within math by switching from using the Connected Math Project 3 (CMP3) in the middle school grades so that all grades are using Go Math across the school. However, at this point the school has only created its own curriculum maps and unit plans for reading and not yet developed curricula aligned to other selected programs for math, social studies and science in order to personalize it based on their students' learning needs.
- Within most teacher's lesson plans reviewed, there are essential questions, highlighted Common Core Learning Standards for the lesson focus, Understanding by Design (UDL) strategies, some integration of the instructional shifts, and assessment strategies to be employed for individual or group tasks. For example, in a 3rd grade teacher's literacy lesson plan, UDL strategies were listed for the subgroups within the class with opportunities for peer discussion, leveled activities and guided questions to support the different learners in the class. Additionally, in a 6th grade reading plan, the teacher planned for students to annotate an article by highlighting important ideas, words and phrases that need further clarification and then develop questions for their peers to respond to by using text-evidence to support their responses. Although most written plans outlined how teacher's intended to execute lessons, few were not as detailed and did not specifically highlight the instructional shifts to be addressed.
- While teachers are planning lessons and tasks to engage all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, by employing UDL strategies, they have yet to fully utilize student work and assessment data to modify or adjust selected programs to meet the needs of their diverse learners. With the exception of kindergarten teachers who analyzed year-end Fountas and Pinnell running record data from the 2013-2014 school year to make adjustments to the Ready Gen program to include more phonics instruction through learning centers, this is not yet the norm across all grades and content areas. At this point, teachers continue to utilize purchased programs with fidelity, without any modifications or adjustments based on their students' data or specific learning needs.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to identify patterns and trends in student learning. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact

While teachers utilize assessments and checks for understanding to track student progress, data is inconsistently used to make effective adjustments to curricula and instruction to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers collect Fountas and Pinnell running records in grades K-5 three times per year, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) in grades 6-8 twice per year, along with Scantron's performance series, as well as curricula aligned unit assessments in English language arts (ELA) and math. Most teachers analyze the results of these assessments during grade and inquiry sessions and store the information within teacher data binders. While middle school teachers use DRP running record data to create small groups for students to work at their levels in ELA during the "What I Need" (WIN) periods, this level of support is only provided to address gaps in student reading skills and not within other content areas. Similarly, while the school provides academic intervention services and Saturday classes to address students' learning needs across the school based on results from reading assessments, this is not a common practice within other content areas. In fact, there was limited evidence provided by the school that demonstrates how students are assessed in other content areas such as social studies and science.
- While there are processes in place for teachers to discuss student data results during team and inquiry sessions, which are sometimes stored within data binders, the results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction. In review of teacher's lesson plans of classrooms visited, there was limited evidence of how students were grouped and the purpose of task assignments, with the exception of one teacher whose plan reflected the use of recent data to differentiate individual and group math tasks. Although early childhood teachers made some adjustments to the Ready Gen program to include more phonics instruction, this is not reflected within other grades and subjects. In review of the limited curricular documents provided, the school continues to utilize purchased programs and the New York State scope and sequence for social studies and science as is, without making modifications or adjustments to program pacing or academic tasks, based on student data.
- Although some teachers were observed checking for understanding by circulating to confer with students during turn and talks, using exit slips or color-coded cards for students to share their understanding, the results from these formative quick checks were inconsistently used to make instructional adjustments. For example, during a 3rd grade ELA lesson, as students worked on creating their leveled Depth of Knowledge questions, the teacher checked in to monitor the groups' understanding of their created questions and clarified when the students coded the questioning inaccurately. However, during an early childhood writing lesson, the teacher conferred with individual students, but did not have a system to monitor or support those who worked independently and struggled with the tasks, except to refer them to a teaching chart that provided limited information. Additionally, opportunities for student self-assessments were only observed during a 3rd grade literacy lesson, 4th grade social studies lesson, and only evident on student writing in one 6th grade classroom.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

There is consistent communication of high expectations to all staff regarding teaching and learning outcomes, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school effectively communicates with families regarding student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Feedback and professional learning opportunities hold teachers accountable for improvements in their practice and student learning. The school's communication with families provides opportunities for them to understand student progress towards meeting the standards.

Supporting Evidence

- During the initial days of school, all staff is provided with various administrative bulletins that outline expectations from student attendance procedures, participation in professional learning sessions, specific instructional tips, as well as criterion for learning tiers. Teachers are held to these standards as administrators visit classrooms to monitor their work with students and offer feedback on their practice. School leaders utilize observation findings to inform professional learning for staff which is aligned to the school's instructional focus, Danielson Framework for Teaching component, 3C-Engaging Students in Learning and based on teacher's needs. Several teachers expressed that administrators often provide feedback on their practice and follow-up on subsequent visits to ensure implementation of suggestions. For example, one teacher shared feedback that indicated that her students were prepared to move to the next level and engage in peer questioning and discussion, and to relinquish some of her responsibilities of completely facilitating class discussions. As a result of the feedback, she has now taken a step back and allowed her students to facilitate their group task and discussions, while supporting them through the process, which was evident during a visit to her classroom.
- During weekly Monday professional learning sessions, teachers are expected to engage in work that supports and improves their teaching practices. For example, each week, teachers engage in inquiry work, the sharing of best practices by modeling lessons for colleagues or discussing problems of practice. In addition, teachers are provided time to attend off-site trainings which are turn-keyed to teachers across the school, which become part of the expectations that school leaders look for as they visit classrooms. Furthermore, identified teachers participate in inter-visitations to colleagues' classrooms to observe best teaching practices ranging from student engagement, to effective questioning and discussion techniques, as well as on classroom management strategies.
- Efforts to keep families abreast of their children's academic and behavioral progress include progress reports, academic alert and interim reports, teacher's monthly newsletters or class chronicles, Engrade, an on-line resource for communicating with middle school students and parents, along with Class Dojo, another technology resource, which provides information on students' daily conduct. Furthermore, the school works with parents to ensure they understand the expectations aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards through workshops, pamphlets and opportunities from the school's librarian to share strategies with families on how to "bond with books" with their children.