

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Alley Pond

26Q046

**64-45 218 Street
Queens
NY, 11364**

Principal: Marsha Goldberg

**Date of review: November 14, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

The School Context

Alley Pond is an elementary school with 578 students from grade pre-k through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 15% Hispanic, 18% White, and 58% Asian, and 2% multi-racial students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 29% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.3%.

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	Well Developed
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	Proficient
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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and teachers continually collect and analyze data in multiple ways to project student outcomes, provide descriptive and meaningful feedback to students and teachers, and modify curricula and instruction to accelerate student growth.

Impact

The school's use of data, culled from common assessments across subject areas, in addition to consistent, ongoing checks for understanding during lesson delivery, enables teachers to make data-informed instructional adjustments. This increases student achievement, as evidenced by the progress made among the students served by the schools interventionist via Response to Intervention (RtI) and Academic Intervention Services (AIS). Moreover, 47%, 52%, and 43% of English language learners (ELLs), lowest third citywide, and students with disabilities (SWDs), respectively, attained a 75th growth percentile or higher in English language arts (ELA), which reveals that the school is on target for closing the achievement gap. Similarly, 50%, 74%, and 55% of ELLs, lowest third citywide, and SWDs, respectively, achieved a 75th growth percentile or higher in math, indicative of the schools ability to exceed the target among the lowest third citywide and meeting the target for closing the achievement gap in math.

Supporting Evidence

- Data management systems are embedded across the school, providing teachers and school leaders prompt access to a range of data and analyses to inform decision-making. Each teacher maintains a plethora of data, such as conference notes, checklists, running records, writing samples, and math unit assessments.
- Teachers across grades use coherent and dynamic means of checking for understanding that results in their increased understanding about student learning in their classrooms so that they are able to adapt their pedagogy, materials, curricula, and instruction. In one third-grade math class, for example, the teacher shaped his modifications to instruction by taking a small group in the back to work on math to assist students at different developmental levels.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms visited, particularly in the three to five grade band, students assessed themselves. For example, in math, they were encouraged to indicate the multiplication strategy they think is most effective and justify their thinking with an explanation and respond to questions such as, "How did the game 250 or Bust help you to push your thinking about multiplication?" Questions of this nature stimulate extended thinking, promote ongoing assessment practices, and encourage students to take ownership of their own learning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Pedagogical practices across classrooms ensure alignment to the school's beliefs about student learning, connect teaching and learning to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and reflect high levels of student participation and thinking, as well as the fashioning of meaningful student work products.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers support learners through the consistent use of Thinking Maps, such as bubble maps, double maps, circle maps, and tree maps, as scaffolds and structures that help students organize their thoughts, engage with content, and transfer cross-content skills, competencies that will empower them to become college and career ready.

Supporting Evidence

- Examples of student work reveal that students are adept at expounding their ideas by supporting general concepts with relevant details and, thus, have become self-directed and independent thinkers within and across subject areas.
- In two fourth grade classes, teachers employed the Socratic Seminar as students, referred to as philosophers, analyzed nonfiction texts using the books *Bones at Work* and *Skeletons Inside Out*, asked questions, made connections, cited text evidence, and engaged in discourse with their peers. The teachers used a variety of materials, such as text annotation checklists, vocabulary words with definitions, thinking map tasks, writing reading responses, and extension activities that encouraged high-level learners to create their own text features. Such practices ensured that all students, including the school's relevant subgroups, had access.
- Through discussion, interaction, and reflection, students are building an infrastructure of skills, habits, knowledge, dispositions, and experience that enables them to approach new challenging texts with confidence and stamina. However, the practice of students taking risks, digging for new meanings, engaging in frequent, high-level discourse, and evaluating the responses of their peers is uneven across classrooms. Thus, opportunities to empower students to take ownership and act on subsequent learning steps to accelerate their own progress are constricted. In addition, the practice of conveying and iterating learning objectives or teaching points was not evident in all classrooms. Consequently, students are not consistently provided with clear visions of learning targets.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula that integrate the instructional shifts, underscore higher-order skills and rigorous habits, align to Common Core and content-area Standards to ensure the sequential progression of the Common Core expectations across grade bands and content areas and provide a diversity of learners access to academic tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Impact

The school's English language arts (ELA) and math curriculum maps are anchored in grade-level texts and challenging math problem solving tasks, respectively, integrate the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards, and thus, ensure that the relationship between tasks and expected learning outcomes is clear and comprehensible and results in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *ReadyGen* and *enVisions* as their core curricula in English language arts (ELA) and math, respectively. Their course maps and unit plans include essential questions aligned to specific content standards, key concepts and skills, instructional activities or strategies, mentor texts and supporting resources that feature a balance of fiction and content-rich nonfiction texts, and exemplars in math, academic vocabulary, and varied types of assessments to gather evidence of learning.
- Instructional plans include rooted tasks and complex texts that underscore consistent rigor to fortify student thinking for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners, foster college and career readiness, and result in gap reduction.
- One teacher, who attended training provided by network personnel, shared ideas culled from his professional learning experience on quick images, number strings, professional literature, websites, and activities to enhance computational fluency.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty consistently express and support high expectations connected to college and career readiness to families and students that result in increased levels of student scholarship, academic progress, goal attainment, and accountability.

Impact

Two-way communication is inclusive of all stakeholders and extremely effective, as indicated on the schools 2013-2014 School Quality Snapshot, in which the school exceeded the target in School Environment, noted by the 97% overall satisfaction rate in the Instructional Core, Systems for Improvement, and School Culture.

Supporting Evidence

- According to the 2013-2014 Learning Environment Survey, 100% of teachers feel supported by the school leaders.
- Progress reports, emails, voice messages, the Kaleidoscope school newsletters, school Web site and face-to-face conferences all serve parents effectively in efforts to improve parent assistance with students' work and ensure progress toward grade-level expectations necessitated by the CCLS.
- A cross-section of parents, deemed active partners in the educational process, work together with the school to drive meaningful change and accelerate the academic and personal growth of students to ensure preparedness for successful futures.
- One parent expressed that the principal is extremely inclusive and stated, "Whatever my child needs can be found here." This is illustrative of the culture of existing partnerships and the range of services to address the needs of students and families proactively. Moreover, there are ample data to reflect that these services are reducing barriers and, thus, making a substantive difference for students, as reflected in the school's recognition as a *Reward* School for 2014-2015. Moreover, the school earned the distinction as a National Blue Ribbon school for 2013-2014 for closing the achievement gap.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

High-level instructional talk and analytical discussions among teacher teams target curriculum and instruction and have led to content-specific professional learning and a heightened sense of accountability.

Impact

School leaders and teachers are dedicated to serve all students in a rigorous educational environment, as demonstrated by their deliberate practice and adaptability to curriculum and instructional approaches, which has resulted in the facilitation of complex learning, increased teacher effectiveness, and the dispersion of leadership across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams, joined by the school’s interventionist and the teacher of English as a second language (TESOL), meet informally during their lunch and preparation periods, as well as formally on Monday afternoons, for collaborative planning. They dedicate their time to analyzing student work products and assessment data, engage in reflecting, planning, monitoring, refining, and assessing instructional effectiveness, and use their knowledge of students to make decisions about particular strategies to maximize support for all learners. Following each meeting, they debrief, reflect, and formulate next steps for the team membership.
- Teachers report that students have greater stamina and acquisition of more complex skills, such as annotating text, making inferences, and defending their ideas with evidence from the text.
- Student writing products unearth tangible evidence of changes made in teaching practice and student learning and indicate that students are more adept at eliciting ideas from one another and embracing more challenging tasks.