



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The School of Heroes

Elementary School Q058

**72-24 Grand Avenue
Queens
NY 11378**

Principal: Adeline Valastro-Tripoli

**Date of review: January 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

The School Context

The School of Heroes is an elementary school with 987 students from grade Kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 1% Black, 40% Hispanic, 25% White, and 34% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96%.

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	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

Across the school, the majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaboration. Most teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students on their grade.

Impact

The impact of teacher team work has led to progress towards goals for groups of students in their reading and performance levels. In addition, teachers are more equipped to monitor progress from writing tasks to provide strategic and targeted writing instruction for individual and groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- During an observed teacher team meeting, grade 5 teachers utilized the *Looking at Student Work Protocol* to determine what students know how to do, what is the desired thinking, and what the teacher will do to move students along. Furthermore, teachers were engaged in a discussion around student work from a recently administered, on-demand writing assessment and shared their findings around the improvements students made on the writing task and further supports needed for a small group of students.
- Teachers shared about the work being done in teams to support classroom instruction by the restructuring of the literacy block, increased opportunities to share during Monday sessions and the frequent analysis of running records. In addition, teachers articulated that teacher teamwork has helped inform the areas students continue to have difficulty with in improving reading fluency and comprehension.
- Teachers articulated their progress towards achieving one of the school goals of increasing the number of students across grades who are performing at or above grade level. Teachers are also using protocols to analyze data and to adjust curriculum within grades by measuring progress during team level meetings, based on conference notes from shared and guided reading practice activities and by the implementation of the shifts into the revised curriculum.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best; however, work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

As a result of inconsistent teaching practices, students are not always exposed to tasks which provide opportunities to engage in discussions that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation and result in varying levels of the quality of student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- While administrators and teachers articulated that students benefit from higher-order questioning and engaging in group or partnership discussions, in only three of the seven classrooms visited, were students working in groups or partnerships. Most lessons were teacher-centered with explicit instruction and provided limited opportunities for students to share their thinking within groups or partnerships. For example, in one math classroom, students were asked to draw quick pictures and record two-digit addition algorithms. Only a few students were able to explain their thinking or work with a partner to complete the task.
- The school believes that activities and assignments promote learning by requiring student thinking that emphasizes depth over breadth and encourages work products that demonstrate high quality student work. However, in a few classes, students had to complete the same standard worksheet by writing down details directly from the text using sequence words like first, next, and last.
- The school has activities and assignments that attempt to promote learning by requiring student thinking in depth and tries to create tasks which produce high quality student work. However, in a few classes, students had to complete the same standard worksheet and were not being challenged to use higher order thinking skills.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that all curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate the instructional shifts. Academic tasks are planned and refined using student work for most subject areas.

Impact

Modifications to the curricula, academic tasks and unit plans make connections to the CCLS and instructional shifts, and build coherence within and across grades. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged. While allowing a diversity of learners to access the curricula to promote cognitive engagement, as well as building coherence within and across grades.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers plan instruction based on the development of curriculum focused on CCLS. Learning targets are translated into student-friendly and grade appropriate language, so that all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs) can understand during lessons...
- Color coded enlarged maps are used to visually represent the different parts of the curriculum and to make connections to curriculum resources, standards, materials, supports for ELLs and SWDs. These are modified during teacher team meetings based on observations discussions, and looking at student work samples.
- Lesson pacing and unit planning for mathematics and English language arts programs are focused on narrowing the scope of the curriculum and deepening the focus of how time and energy are spent in the classroom by a prioritizing the Common Core Learning Standards.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, checklists and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. In addition, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

The results of these inconsistent assessment practices across the school have hindered effective adjustments to instruction across grades and have restricted both teachers' and students' understanding of next learning steps, particularly for advanced learners and some special populations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses checklists, rubrics, performance tasks, and summative data from the previous school year standardized tests to chart student performance on colorful enlarged spreadsheets. The school is developing spreadsheets to reflect the current school formative data from observations, conference notes, running records, and classroom work products.
- During meetings with students, some students were able to articulate what they were learning during class time or from their work products based on general feedback, which was often times not aligned to rubric language. In some classes, feedback to students included, "good job or excellent job," which did not provide them with detailed information to fully understand what grade level work should look like, their next steps, or how to assess their own work to make improvements.
- Across some classrooms, teachers missed opportunities to check for student understanding of assignments before moving on in the lesson. For example, some students in one class were unable to explain the purpose of the rubric to improve or help them with their writing task. Additionally, the use of thumbs up or down was seen in some class as a tool to check for understanding, but data was not captured by teachers to inform curricula adjustments or the next steps for teaching during the point of the lesson. Some students expressed being unclear of the expectations of the task to add text-based evidence to support their predications, and articulated not knowing what to do when they had completed their work.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently messaged to staff via trainings and other modes of communication. Workshops keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

School leaders provide staff with training and have a system of accountability for their high expectations. Frequent communication support families in understanding their child’s progress towards high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations to the staff through a staff handbook, ongoing memoranda, and professional development on topics such as activating prior knowledge, questioning and discussion techniques, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) Writing tool, and the culturally responsive classroom. A system of accountability has been established for those expectations. For example, teachers receive a support plan concentrating on Domain 3 of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, coupled with professional support. Instructional supervisors provide next steps, and teachers reflect on feedback received, and their progress towards goals.
- The school communicates expectations to parents through parent handbooks, surveys, bulletins, parent engagement forums, newsletters and a series of parent workshops that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. For example, the school facilitates parent workshops and Myon diagnostics for a parent-student reading library with Lexile levels.
- Administrative staff, teachers, and the parent coordinator host workshops for parents. Parents receive newsletters from teachers that provide suggestions to help their children at home with homework as well as providing tips to better prepare them in reading and math.