



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Springfield Gardens

Middle School Q059

**132-55 Ridgedale Street
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Carleton E. Gordon

**Date of review: March 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Tammy Pate**

The School Context

Springfield Gardens is a middle school with 507 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 89% Black, 6% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 11% 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 91.7%.

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	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
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built teacher leadership capacity.

Impact

The analysis of student work for students that teachers have in common is resulting in improved teacher practice, increased student performance, and empowered teacher leaders that have a voice in key decision making that affects instruction and student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet to look at student work in order to refine curricula and inform next steps. Teams span across content areas and grades and utilize both programmed meeting time and contractual afterschool time. Teachers shared that teams meet to look at student work in order to refine curricula and inform next steps.
- Teacher teams use scheduled meetings to discuss the performance and needs of students they share in common. During a team meeting, a teacher shared her experience supporting a student with disabilities who had struggled with a complex concept. She recalled that the student was on her watch list for students who had failed to make adequate growth over the course of the semester. She recounted sharing her concerns within her teacher team and the guidance she received from former teachers of the student. Following the implementation of graphic organizers, the inclusion of tiered texts, and self-assessment tools, the student was able to identify her areas of challenge and together the teacher and student worked to successfully improve the student's performance. The increased collaboration among teachers has provided a great platform for teachers to discuss and refine curricula, analyze student work, and brainstorm new initiatives for teaching and learning.
- To build distributive leadership, teachers and teams partner with out of school agencies and attend professional learning opportunities. The school currently partners with Discovery Ed, the New York Hall of Science, North Shore Long Island Jewish Medical Center, and Grow NYC to support students' college and career readiness.
- The school's data specialist collects and aggregates student performance data onto a school wide and class-based tracking system so that teacher teams are able to easily monitor performance of individual students and groups of students over time. This enables teachers to more effectively analyze assessment data and make recommendations for improved instruction. During a team meeting, teachers in the math department reviewed a recent assessment. After analyzing results, they highlighted trends and noticings. One noticing was that a particular group of students had difficulty multiplying fractions. They decided to offer students the option to convert the fractions to decimals. Another teacher added that the team must then review the prior lesson on rounding decimals because it would impact students' final answers.

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. Teaching strategies, including questioning, scaffolds in English and/or native language where appropriate, and routines are beginning to provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

While teaching practices across classrooms are becoming aligned to the curricula, they inconsistently provide multiple entry points into curricula, leading to an uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited there were limited instructional strategies used to accommodate a diversity of learners in the classroom, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Questioning was of low cognitive demand, utilizing questions that focused on Webb's Depth of Knowledge levels 1 & 2 (recall/production and skill/concept) tasks. For example, in a grade 6 math class, after a mini-lesson on using a formula to write algebraic equations, the teacher placed students in groups and asked them to record jumping jack counts in a table. While the activity engaged and excited the students, the task of recording their observations was of low-cognitive demand, and offered little differentiation.
- School leaders use feedback based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching to support teachers in implementing the current Common Core Learning Standards curricula into daily instructional practice. The school is currently assessing the effectiveness of several multiple entry point strategies and instructional practices that have been implemented this year.
- Administration shared that the Danielson Framework for Teaching has enabled the teachers to move their instruction from a traditional teacher-centric delivery model to one where student work becomes the focus. The framework encourages teachers to place greater emphasis on student initiated conversation and questions, as well as to involve students as partners in their own academic outcomes. Classroom visits revealed limited evidence of student initiated discussions. In a grade 8 English language arts (ELA) class, students followed a call and response structure with the teacher controlling the conversation. The same discussion pattern was evident in a grade 7 science class and in a grade 6 math class. An exception to this was observed in a grade 7 math class, where students worked independently in groups to solve and prepare a presentation of their solution to the class. Each group shared their answers and answered questions posed by their peers and the teacher.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and content standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness. Rigorous curriculum and academic tasks assure access for all students to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and teachers shared that they have worked diligently to align all curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards. The school's curricula include rigorous writing and critical thinking components that satisfy Common Core demands and focus on non-fiction texts and text citation, addressing the instructional shifts. Citation of evidence in students' writing is an expectation in every content area. This practice was observed in the ELA and math curricular units, where students were expected to use various non-fiction sources to support their writing. In math, the curriculum intentionally builds fluency by revisiting skills such as number ordering and solving for a system of inequalities in graphing throughout the school year.
- Lesson plans include a focus on vocabulary building so that students are able to engage in grade specific complex texts. Lesson plans also include essential questions and standards that teachers scaffold over several days. Administration shared that they constantly review and analyze student work to determine curriculum effectiveness. When they have noticed individual students and groups of students struggling with a standard, teams diagnose and revise the curriculum to meet student learning needs.
- Teachers across grades and subjects use student work and assessment data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks in order to engage all students cognitively, including the lower and higher achieving students. The school currently uses Scholastic's Code X for ELA and Pearson's Connected Mathematics Project 3 (CMP3) for math, both of which are Department of Education recommended Common Core aligned curricula. Administration shared that teacher teams adjusted both in response to student assessment results. They adjusted unit timelines and added various leveled texts to assure engagement of students at all levels.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

The use of assessments aligned to curricula, on-going assessments, grading practices, and analysis of student learning outcomes provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and teachers use these results to adjust curricula and instruction and enable them to make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration shared that teachers grade tasks and assessments, analyze data, and then adjust their instruction based on this new evidence. This practice was evident during an observed math team meeting. Teams agree upon which standards to assess based on prior year summative assessment data, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) results and unit tests. Teachers use pre and post-tests as part of the CMP3 curriculum. From these results, they identify high leverage standards to focus upon. Standards based curricula are taught and assessed and teachers then share the resulting data during team meetings. The teams plan weekly units vertically by content and horizontally by grade. Lesson plans include references to the assessment results.
- Lesson plans and activities evidenced the use of multiple forms of checks for understanding, which students record on data organizers. Teachers then analyze these organizers during team meetings to determine if and to what extent students successfully learned. During a team meeting observation, math teachers reviewed student responses on a check for understanding form and noted the same students who had difficulty with perimeter also struggled with multiplying and converting fractions. Based on this noticing they revised the upcoming unit to include a reteach of the standard, and the inclusion of colored markers to represent graphically smaller portions of larger shapes so that students could break down complex shapes into simpler ones.
- The school has rolled out several checks for understanding protocols for use during the instructional period. These include cups (red, yellow, green), exit tickets, thumbs up/thumbs down, small group and individual conferencing, student presentation and student dialog procedures. The principal also shared that throughout all content areas, teachers administer a pre-assessment, post-assessment, and minimum of three interim/formative assessments. Assessments are Common Core Standards-based and uniform as per content and grade, and teacher teams meet weekly to review their assessment data.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and establish a culture for learning that offers ongoing feedback to help students and families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Impact

Students and families show appreciation and positively reflect on the school-wide feedback practices that help them understand their student's progress and state that the school's focus on college and career readiness supports their students in getting to the next level in life and education.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are vertically and horizontally organized by grade and content area. The teams use protocols for looking at student work and use administrator feedback from the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the basis for inquiry to support specific teachers in understanding how to assure student mastery of a standard. Staff members have instituted a culture for learning that provides all students, especially those in high-needs subgroups, with focused, effective feedback. The feedback includes clear next steps that determine student accountability for achievement of learning goals and expectations to prepare them for their next grade while ensuring their ownership of the learning process.
- Parents remark that regardless of when students enter the school, guidance staff, teachers and administrators work to support students in making progress and prepare for college and careers and parents are supported and encouraged to partner with the school through frequent communication, progress reports and leadership opportunities. Weekly email messages with school wide highlights, as well as the next week's upcoming events, help to assure all stakeholders are aware and contribute to the school's goals for student achievement.
- Students share that teachers and administration help them to do well in their classes by providing feedback on difficult tasks and rubrics, and by providing multiple opportunities to improve their performance and grades. Students shared work products that have rubric-based feedback that is detailed and encouraging. Students were able to explain their current levels and their plan for moving to the next level. They explained that they know how they are doing and what they need to do better after reading the teacher's notes.
- The school's guidance team and the parent coordinator communicate with parents using TeacherEase, a web-based grade book communication program, and School Messenger, a school notification system. In addition, they use flyers, newsletters, and school calendars to inform them of pertinent information about workshop offerings and information on college and career readiness. The guidance counselor also holds information day and night meetings for students and parents and works to assure every child finds a school that supports their interests and learning needs.