



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**The Woodhaven School**

**Elementary School Q060**

**91-02 88 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11421**

**Principal: Frank Desario**

**Date of review: February 26, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

## The School Context

The Woodhaven School is an elementary school with 1,232 students from grade prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 74% Hispanic, 5% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.3%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The school analyzes the results of common assessments to adjust instruction and curricula, and to track student progress toward meeting goals. Teachers and students consistently assess students' understanding of the curricula.

### Impact

All students, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs), demonstrate their learning and are aware of the steps to take to improve their performance.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school periodically administers practice NY State tests and aggregates data on how well students perform by class and by grade. They use this data to help them determine if students are improving. For example, in December, the fourth grade averaged 47% of students at level 3 or 4, and in February, the average was 57%. The teachers further analyze the performance of each student to determine the focus of future instruction. One teacher noted that 39% of her students need more strategies to answer multiple choice questions. One Integrated Co-Teaching team grouped students using the results of these assessments and identified the level of support they would need. For example, one group of students would be provided with teacher assistance including simplification and redirection. Other students would work one-on-one with a teacher.
- Teachers assess students reading levels and identify the end-of-year goal level for each student on a monthly basis in alignment with the instructional focus for the school as a whole. For example, a teacher assessed a student with an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) at a level I in September, a level L in January, and set a goal of level M by the end of the year. Student progress reports in January, 2015 include the student's reading level as measured against Fountas & Pinnell benchmark levels. The principal's focus on preparing students for the next grade level is reflected in his tracking of progress in reading levels by grade. In September, 3% of fifth graders were reading at benchmark levels of U to Z. In January, 44% were reading at those levels.
- Teachers assess whether students have mastered or attempted the reading skill of the week and record observations of how students work. One teacher recorded that three students had mastered and 18 students had attempted the reading skill "cause and effect." For each of the 18 students who had attempted the skill, the teacher noted next steps, such as, "[This student] must refer to the text more."
- Students regularly peer- and self-assess their writing. One writing sample included comments from a peer on how she liked the way the writer used capital letters, commas, and periods. She continued that the writer needed to work on staying on topic. A math rubric describes a Level 1 as "I got the right answer, but I didn't show my work" and a Level 3 as "I understood the problem completely and could explain it to someone else." The rubrics are written to be understood by children, who indicated that they use them to determine what they need to do to improve their work.

## Area of Focus

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

Teachers meet in inquiry-based teams that promote achievement of school goals and the integration of the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards by analyzing assessment data and student work.

### Impact

Although teacher practices improve as a result of the work they do in their teams, this work has not yet fully strengthened the shared instructional capacity of all teachers leading to school-wide instructional coherence.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams, such as the Academic Intervention Services Inquiry Team, meet formally two times a month to review assessment data and student work for struggling students. They occasionally meet informally in addition to these scheduled meetings and the principal will provide coverages if needed for a team to meet outside of their regular schedule. This infrequent formal meeting time limits the teams' opportunities for sustained inquiry practices.
- Teachers plan together to deepen their shared understanding of the Common Core and ways to incorporate the instructional shifts. They often, but not always, submit minutes of their meetings to the principal. One set of minutes from a meeting of the special education common prep team indicated that teachers shared an Individual Education Plan (IEP) rubric they had received at a professional development session outside of the school and discussed ways to adapt the rubric for use in their school.
- The teachers participate in a professional development team that follows a cycle of collaboration beginning with assessing students' needs, aggregating the data and reviewing it on grade level teams to determine areas of improvement, consulting with the Reading Team to identify best practices and design professional development, implementing the identified strategies and re-assessing students to start the cycle over again.
- One inquiry team was observed reviewing the progress a student had made in writing. In October, the third grade child was able to write a few simple sentences with many spelling errors, and no paragraph structure. In January, the child's writing demonstrated paragraph structure and fewer spelling and punctuation errors. The team noted that the third paragraph of the January writing sample had some of the same errors found in the October writing sample and wondered if fatigue was causing him to lose focus. They determined they would work with him on developing stamina in his writing and noted he was close to his IEP goal of writing a three paragraph essay.

## 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 curricula are aligned to the Common Core and content standards and strategically incorporate the instructional shifts while emphasizing rigorous habits and higher-order skills in academic tasks that are coherently embedded across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Curricula promote college and career readiness by preparing children for the next grade level. Lessons are planned to include challenging tasks that require all students to demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the *Wonders* Reading Program for literacy in grades K through 5, and *Go Math!* for math. They supplement and enrich with materials from *Words Their Way*, *MyON*, *Starfalls* and *Foundations*. Teachers have identified common fiction texts for each grade, such as *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* for grade 4 and *Swiss Family Robinson* for grade 5 leading to coherence across all classes. In order to promote skills that prepare students for the next level and ultimately for college and career, teachers use a school-wide calendar of reading skills to be emphasized in lessons for general education students as well as students with disabilities and ELLs. Lesson plans reflect the spiraling of topics such as, finding the main idea, recognizing cause and effect, and making predictions throughout the year so that they are reemphasized several times. Professional development is provided on incorporating these skills into lesson plans and having teachers develop questions on all of the Depth of Knowledge levels that ask students to predict, extend, compare, interpret and prove.
- Buddy teachers co-plan monthly lessons for both of their classes, using themes like citizenship and generosity from the *Cloud 9* character development program. The school leader explained that planning these lessons is a good way for buddy teachers to learn from each other and to sharing best practices. “This is a great opportunity for you to plan exciting and motivational lessons with your co-teacher.”
- Unit and lesson plans reference the standards. Literacy unit plans explicitly incorporate phonics, fluency, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. A second grade reading unit plan focused on animals includes cross-disciplinary essential questions such as, “How are all living things connected?” with vocabulary that includes “ecosystem”, “extinct”, and “camouflaged.” Professional development is provided on applying the English language arts (ELA) and math instructional shifts to teacher practice.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points for all learners to be engaged in challenging tasks.

### **Impact**

Student work products reflect consistently high levels of participation and thinking.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Many lessons were characterized by the teacher facilitating the discussion and the students taking active part in creating their own learning by using manipulatives, accessing information online, and participating in small group discussions. Often the students have choice in what activity they want to join. In a science class, students were using a graphic design to remind them of how many quarts are in a gallon or how many cups and pints are in a quart. Students were actively engaged, although not all of them were able to make real-world connections between the graphic design and the actual quantities.
- Teachers organize their classes in groups to differentiate instruction. In a kindergarten class, one group of students was working on writing the letter “H” while another group was doing a guided reading lesson with the teacher making notes of individual student’s efforts. Teachers identify students (by name) for the type of differentiated instruction that would be the best for them. In one lesson, several students were grouped for reading directions aloud. Other plans identify the students for guided reading groups based on reading skills such as “sequencing” or “compare and contrast.”
- Students in a third grade class used four-square graphic organizers as they researched an informational writing project. One student wrote “All About Kenya,” in which she related interesting facts about how the culture in Kenya differed from the culture of her native Colombia.
- One teacher was observed asking a prekindergarten student to sit next to her so she could help the child practice holding a pencil. The other students in this class were highly engaged at self-selected learning centers playing with blocks, trucks and trains; pouring water or sand from different sized containers at the water and sand tables, painting at an easel, or working with a teacher to practice writing letters.
- One teacher was observed working with two IEP students to provide targeted support in a small group while the rest of the class was engaged in a whole class discussion about genetics. The teacher had anticipated that students might misunderstand how a trait can be inherited, which happened when a fourth grade student claimed, “I inherited my hair from my brother.” When the teacher responded to this remark, reminding the student that children inherit traits from their parents, there was a missed opportunity for students to extend ownership of their learning.

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

School leaders clearly communicate high expectations for teachers' professionalism and, with teachers, partner with parents to support all students in their journey toward college.

### Impact

Teachers, parents and school leaders hold each other accountable for supporting students in meeting high expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The theme of this year's Race to Read competition for kindergarten through grade 5 is "On the Road to College." Students indicated that they record the amount of time or the number of pages they read every day in their reading logs and that they review these logs with their parents and teachers to ensure they are meeting their reading goals. The winners from each class, and their parents, will be invited to visit the campus of St. John's University.
- The principal communicates high expectations to all teachers and holds them accountable for adhering to the school-wide focus on developing reading skills in all grades and content areas. Professional development on creating lessons using school-wide reading skills included a notice that emphasized the principal's expectation that "Teachers should be modeling how to apply these practices in their lessons...and children are expected to apply them independently." The school leaders support the teaching of these skills through the observation cycle. One observation noted that the teachers should "Make sure your pre-reading activities don't take too much time away from the time the students actually have to practice reading and applying skills and strategies."
- The school uses eChalk, an online platform, to inform teachers, parents, and students about student progress. The principal communicated the expectations that all teachers should use this resource and make it "as user friendly as possible for parents." This communication also included the request that homework be listed in the "Events" section so that parents can print homework calendars. Teachers send home reports on how each child performs on end of unit tests. One such report indicated what standards were related to each question on the test, what common misunderstanding might happen, and whether the student answered it correctly or not. Parents report that they rely on eChalk daily to check homework and school events.
- The guidance counselor communicates with parents inviting them to contact her by phone or email and informing them about the resources available to them on the new school website. The school frequently holds workshops designed to help parents understand the expectations for their children on topics that include the middle school choice process and "Math at the Kitchen Table."