



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Chester Park

Elementary School Q062

**97-25 108 Street
Queens
NY 11419**

Principal: Angela O'Dowd

**Date of review: March 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shirley Wheeler-Massey**

The School Context

Chester Park is an elementary school with 925 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 27% Hispanic, 2% White, 62% Asian, and 4% American Indian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 6% 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 94.8%.

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	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders effectively convey high expectations regarding teaching and learning through open dialogue and professional learning opportunities for all staff. School staff effectively collaborates with families in relation to students' college and career readiness.

Impact

The ongoing communication around high expectations to staff, students, and families has promoted reciprocal responsibility in support of teacher and student improvement efforts. Families understand students' progress toward achieving college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- On the first days of school, teachers are provided with a staff handbook that delineates their professional responsibilities and a literacy and math expectations guide, which provides a clear outline for instructional and assessment practices. Throughout the year, teachers are expected to complete student tracking worksheets and are scheduled to meet with administrators to discuss the strategies they use to address learner's specific needs, and how they monitor and support struggling learners. Additionally, teachers are provided opportunities to reflect on their practice, as it relates to the components of Danielson's Framework for Teaching and through professional learning sessions on 3c-Engaging Students in Learning and 3d-Using Assessments in Instruction, which are often facilitated by teachers across the school. Administrators survey school staff often to evaluate the effectiveness of on-site professional development, as well as visit classrooms, with the support of teacher leaders, to follow-up on implementation of strategies learned, as well as on feedback provided from previous observations.
- Selected lead teachers are assigned to mentor new teachers and those teachers in need of support as identified through informal and formal observations. Teacher participants engage in inter-visitations and feedback sessions that support improving teacher practice. During these visits, teachers complete a classroom visitation tool, where they identify the purpose of the visit aligned to a component from Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Teachers are expected to reflect on their own practice and pinpoint new learning for future implementation in their own classrooms. The cycle of support continues through the work of lead teachers, on and off site trainings, and follow-up classroom visits from administrators and teacher leaders to ensure that feedback is implemented.
- The school provides ongoing workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards specifically with an emphasis in math, as parents shared they were struggling to support their children "with the new style of teaching and learning math". After a series of workshops, parents expressed great satisfaction stating that they now understand the "new way" are able to assist their children at home more productively. Furthermore, parents shared that the communication from their children's teachers within individual class websites helps them understand what their children are working on in the class, expectations for homework, and how their children are improving from the CAN Cards, which outline their children's strengths and next steps. The school also hosts a parent Career Day, where parents visit classrooms and share their careers with students across the school providing information to guide and assist students in developing a deeper understanding of the expectations related to and for college and career decisions.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices across classrooms are aligned to the curricula and the school's core beliefs in using various scaffolds and student collaboration to support learning. However, some teachers struggle with the implementation of strategic multiple entry points and intentional extension tasks that support all learners' needs.

Impact

While students are challenged through tasks and deep discussions that require reflection and evidence, there are missed opportunities in planning and in providing strategic scaffolds and extensions to fully engage all learners in tasks that maximize thinking and learning within their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students worked in partnerships and small groups, used technology such as Smart boards and document cameras to support presentations, and utilized provided scaffolds such as visual aids, writing prompts and stems, math manipulatives, graphic organizers, and charts. Within classrooms visited, students used academic vocabulary demonstrating their understanding of content and used text evidence to support their verbal and written responses. For example, in a fourth grade classroom, students worked in triads to complete a task that required them to make a hypothesis and discuss whether conductors or insulators are always magnetic. Students were given opportunities to test various materials and discuss within their small groups whether their hypotheses were accurate.
- During visits to classrooms, most teachers used questions, such as "How can we explain this concept using other academic vocabulary?" in order to challenge students' thinking and to push a deeper understanding of the content or skill being taught. In most instances, teachers provided students with academic tasks that required them to demonstrate their understanding and explain their approaches to completing the assignments. For example, during a fifth grade math lesson, students worked in small groups on various math problems challenging each other to explain strategies used and/or asking each other for support to solve various problems that required them to multiply and divide fractions and decimal fractions.
- Although students, including English Language Learners (Ells) and students with disabilities were given opportunities to engage with tasks or texts that challenged their thinking, strategic multiple points of entry and extension activities, were not always offered to students who were prepared for more stimulating work. In a fifth grade classroom, students worked on various math fraction problems, using fraction strips and tape models as needed to solve assigned math problems and after teacher assessment, were then provided more difficult problems that allowed them to challenge themselves and gain a deeper understanding of the skill. However, in a third grade classroom, all students, including Ells and students with disabilities, who were at varying academic levels, worked on the same short response question, utilizing the same illustrations and prompts for writing, while some who were observed navigating and completing the task quickly, were not provided other graphic organizers or opportunities to extend their thinking through more challenging writing tasks.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has done extensive curricula work to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards with strategic integration of the instructional shifts. Teachers utilize student work and data to develop and refine curricula, assessments, and academic tasks.

Impact

Ongoing and collaborative curricula development and refinement based on data has led to coherence across the school and the promotion of college and career readiness so that all learners have access to engaging learning experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- Over the course of several years, as a Common Core lab site, the school has created and refined their own curriculum maps and units of study for literacy, social studies, and science. The school's literacy curriculum uses Understanding by Design as a framework to develop units that integrate the instructional shifts such close reading, exposure to complex texts, a balance of fiction and non-fiction texts, and citing text-based evidence to support a claim. Providing exposure to academic and tier two vocabulary is emphasized across content areas to support and build ELLs' vocabulary toolkits. In addition, teachers use the Jolly Phonics interactive program to support phonemic awareness in the lower grades and for grammar support in the upper grades. For math, teachers use the math curriculum from Common Core.org, and modify their lesson plans to meet the needs of their students. Through this curriculum, students are working on math fluency, using multiple means to strategize through problems to develop a deeper understanding of content through rigorous Common Core aligned math problem-solving tasks and assessments.
- Units of study across grades and content areas span over the course of five to six weeks and include and include common chosen instructional shifts as well as unit summaries that explain the purpose of the unit, and end-of-unit performance tasks that include narrative, opinion/argumentative, procedural, and report writing. ELLs and students with disabilities are also exposed to the same content and rigorous tasks through modified units that include a focus on literacy and speaking skills, writing fluency, academic vocabulary, as well as comprehension and collaboration. These units are collaboratively designed by English as a Second Language and general education teachers who share ideas on how to support the needs of their diverse learners, while ensuring rigor and content are maintained for all.
- Grade teams collaboratively analyze and use assessment data and student work to design and modify curriculum maps, units of study, academic tasks, as well as end of unit assessments. The school's focus on their assessment practices has resulted in the modifications of their units to include, not only their end of unit performance tasks, but specific pre- and post-assessments that focus on skills addressed within units, as well as gaps in student learning. The creation of various assessments has allowed teachers to identify the needs of their diverse learners and differentiate tasks and assessments to the needs of ELLs, students with disabilities, as well as advanced learners. In a fifth grade unit on "Nature's Balance", one of the assessments for beginner and intermediate students' includes retelling/summarizing a science article from the unit, while advanced students are expected to analyze and explain the same science article; a difference from previous year's when teachers would provide the same assessment to all students.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers and students utilize assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula and the Common Core Learning Standards to understand academic needs. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of on-going checks for understanding.

Impact

The use of varied assessment tools has allowed for feedback to students and teachers that inform curricula and instructional adjustments to support all learners' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, to strengthen actionable feedback teachers are developing new pre- and mid-, unit assessments aligned to the school's units of study for literacy, social studies, and science based on data gleaned from Mastery Connect, an on-line resource used to store and monitor student data. Teachers utilize data from pre-, mid-, and post- assessments to identify students' needs and determine next instructional steps. Further, they analyze student outcomes by standard and develop post assessments that address the areas identified for re-teaching or remediation. In addition, teachers use math assessments from their math curricula that assess students' fluency, problem-solving skills, and ability to apply various mathematical strategies to solve problems. The school also administers base, mid, and end-of-unit writing assessments accompanied by standards-aligned rubrics to determine students' writing abilities and needs. The review of most recently administered writing assessments reflect an average of 19% gain in mastery across the school of students' narrative writing skills, from their fall baseline to the mid line writing assessments.
- During visits to classrooms, most teachers checked for understanding either by circulating to small groups or individual students, by employing assessment techniques such as fist-to-five, and by using exit slips at the close of a lesson. Some teachers use tools to memorialize data captured during individual student conferences and organize their groups based on this information. While most student work products observed on classroom and hallway bulletin boards demonstrated evidence of students' use of the school's self-assessment tools, the CAN Cards, a student-friendly tool aligned to each task's rubric and the Common Core Learning Standards; students were not always able to articulate their goals or next steps for learning, based on feedback from their teachers and their own self-assessments.
- Across the school, teachers utilize either a two or four point rubric based on the specific task or content area to determine where students are and their next steps for teaching. Within grade teams, teachers create and modify their own grade-level rubrics based on data analysis to ensure they are capturing accurate data on their diverse students' needs. Rubrics across content areas assess five common elements to assess student work: organization, elaboration, use of academic vocabulary, and writing conventions. In most instances, teacher feedback is aligned to the expectations outlined within the rubric, but does not always provide meaningful next steps that allow students to fully understand what they need to do to improve their work and go to the next level. For example, one teacher noted on a students' writing "keep working on vocabulary and grammar, it will lead you to the path of becoming an expert in writing." While writing conventions was part of the task rubric, this feedback does not provide the student with the necessary support to move writing from the current Level 3 to a Level 4.

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

Embedded distributive leadership structures support the ongoing and judicious collaborative work within teacher teams to analyze student work and assessment data.

Impact

The ongoing systematic analysis of student work and data has led to teachers making instructional and assessment decisions that have improved their practice and increased students' writing skills across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers are meeting in grade and vertical teams to look closely at student writing and data using various protocols such as Notice and Wonder and Looking at Student Work to Evaluate Intervention Strategies, as well as a comparative data analysis and reflection tool to identify class and grade-wide trends of strengths, gaps, and misconceptions to determine rationales and next steps for teaching. Teacher teams log and track their teams' work within Google Docs so that strategies and next steps can be shared across the school. Additionally, teachers utilize data within the on-line resources School Net and Mastery Connect to identify standards that need further support, remediation, or extensions of learning.
- Within grade teams, teachers rotate responsibilities such as facilitator, timekeeper, and note-taker. During an observed meeting, third grade teachers used the Looking at Student Work to Evaluate Intervention Strategies protocol to analyze the writing of two students whose writing they had previously examined. Presenting teachers shared two samples of writing for each student, the strategies that were employed to support the students' writing skill development, and discussed their noticings between the two writing assessments. The team identified significant progress within the students' pre and post writing samples and attributed progress to the organizational tools provided to students after the initial base-line assessment. Teachers expressed their appreciation for being able to share ideas, best practices, and tools across the grade and vertical teams which they said made them feel more equipped to teach writing and support their diverse student population, citing a 26% increase in third grade students demonstrating mastery of narrative writing from the baseline to the midline writing task this school year.
- Teachers across the school are engaged in decision-making around the creation of assessments that support the school's curricula and students' needs, developing and facilitating professional learning for their colleagues, as well as mentoring and providing feedback to new teachers. Furthermore, school leaders have identified lead teacher facilitators for literacy and math teams and provide opportunities for all teachers to identify their own pedagogical needs to attend external workshops or request on-site support. Teachers articulated that they feel they have a "strong voice" in making instructional, curricular and assessment decisions based on what they identify as school-wide needs from their regular analysis of student work and outcomes and have been given full autonomy in the creation of assessments and use of writing resources that address the gaps in student writing skills, which have allowed them to see the progress in student writing skills across the school.