



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 063 Old South

Elementary Q063

**90-15 Sutter Avenue
Queens
NY 11417**

Principal: Diane Marino

**Date of review: January 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shirley Wheeler-Massey**

The School Context

P.S.63 Old South is an elementary school with 1,362 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 51% Hispanic, 8% White, 30% Asian and 5% other students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Throughout the school, teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that focus on improving teacher pedagogy and student outcomes. Teacher leaders maintain an active role in the organization and facilitation of professional learning across the school.

Impact

Professional collaborations have led to more opportunities for teachers to share best practices and become more reflective practitioners, which has resulted in improved student writing throughout the school. School leaders empower teachers to make critical curricula and instructional decisions that support student learning and effective teacher leadership.

Supporting Evidence

- During grade level meetings teachers look at student work products and assessment data through the use of the *Looking at Student Work* and *Tuning Protocols*. Teachers take on various roles throughout team meetings and present student work with a specific focus, and provide each other with noticings and implications for future teaching. During an observed meeting, grade 5 teachers were focused on providing organizational strategies to a colleague in order to support one student who continues to struggle with organizational writing skills.
- Across the grades, teachers are paying special attention to the school's instructional focus of improving student writing. Teachers share best practices and strategies that support the diversity of students in their classrooms. One teacher shared how encouraging students to use sentence starters has assisted some students with constructed response questions, Another teacher shared that pushing her more proficient writers to think creatively and use their own words has allowed them to see an improvement in student writing across the grade, which was reflected on bulletin boards throughout the building.
- Teacher representatives across the school work collaboratively on the professional development team who makes decisions on professional learning sessions for staff as well as curricular and instructional adjustments that are presented from grade teams. Various teachers turnkey and facilitate differentiated sessions that support teacher and student learning. For instance, one teacher who attended an external training for the Go Math program presented the new changes and online resources to the staff, which allowed them to better utilize the program's various tools and differentiate tasks and homework for students.
- Teachers expressed that their voice is always respected and valued and that administrators provide them the freedom to make curricular and instructional decisions they believe are educationally sound and meet the needs of their students. For example, this year, teachers modified the Ready Gen program based on data from last year's State English language arts assessments because the program did not provide the writing strategies and support their students' needs. Teachers collaboratively revised Ready Gen to include key writing elements they believed would improve their students' writing.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While teachers' instructional practices are aligned to the school's beliefs about student learning, students are not always provided strategic multiple entry points or exposed to high level questions.

Impact

As a result of a common understanding of student learning, across classrooms, students are provided opportunities to be engaged in their learning process. However, there are missed opportunities to pose higher-order thinking questions and strategically differentiate learning, so that all students are pushed to think critically in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The belief that students should be engaged in their own learning through engaging and rigorous tasks was evident across classrooms. In most classrooms, students were observed engaging in partner and small group discussions and citing evidence from text to support their verbal and written responses. For example, in one classroom, students were given choice in how they wanted to demonstrate their understanding of a selected text and were required to either write an essay using first and third person point of view with specific evidence and quotes to support their writing, while other students were provided with graphic organizers, such as an opinion planner organizer to support them with their opinion writing. Students were also provided with accountable talk stems to guide their discussions within partnerships or small groups.
- Across classrooms, teachers provided different multiple entry points and scaffolds, such as math manipulatives, visual aids, various graphic organizer and technology to support student learning. Students utilized these tools to complete tasks and demonstrate their understanding through discussions and writing. However, tasks were not always strategically assigned to students to ensure they were appropriately challenged with extensions to push their thinking. For instance, in one class, students worked with a partner on a task that allowed them to choose objects to test to see whether they were insulators or conductors of electricity. However, some students who understood the content and completed the tasks early, were not provided with enrichment or clearly defined tasks that pushed their understanding of the content.
- While most teachers posed varying levels of questions that ranged from Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels 1-4 based on student ability and knowledge, there were instances in which questions were not always open-ended or designed to challenge those students that were secure with the content and task. For example, some teachers asked questions such as, "How can you use the strategy draw a diagram to solve fraction problems?" "Explain how you would use these manipulatives to get to this number" or "How can you find the next number in the pattern? "Can you elaborate on that idea?" Yet a few teachers posed some questions, such as, "What is the main idea of the story?" or "What is the function of the Table of Contents?" which did not always lead to critical thinking for all students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the school, teachers are effectively utilizing curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards with deliberate integration of the instructional shifts. Teachers appropriately plan and modify lessons and tasks for all students using student work and data.

Impact

Collaborative curricula decisions have allowed all students throughout the school to be exposed to a range of highly engaging learning experiences and academic tasks that meet their specific learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades, teachers have been using the ReadyGen and Go Math programs for the last two years, along with the Core scope and sequence for science and social studies. Curriculum maps and lesson plans reflect evidence of the instructional shifts such as exposing students to complex informational and literary text, such as *Heart and Soul*, *The Challenge*, as well as *The Drinking Gourd*, and the expectation for students to cite evidence to support their thinking and writing. Teachers are also emphasizing within lessons the appropriate use of academic vocabulary by having students incorporate it into their written and verbal responses, thereby further supporting the school's focus of improving student writing across all content areas.
- During grade team meetings, teachers are using student writing samples and data to organize and modify their lessons and academic tasks. Teachers are also using Performance Based Assessments to backwards map and to adjust previous units and lessons. In looking at student work, teachers decided that they needed to revisit the tools, graphic organizers and resources they were using to support struggling writers. Some teachers decided that they would continue using the Restate, Answer, Text Support strategy (RATS), while others felt that they would include a variety of graphic organizers, such as the Four Square Writing organizer to assist with short and extended responses.
- In review of student data and writing, school leaders and teachers collaboratively revised literacy and writing curriculum maps to include additional standards, integrate content and utilize the *Universal Design for Learning* approach to support student learning. A review of grade 3 and 5 curriculum maps for this year indicate the inclusion of additional resources such as technology, role playing, student choice and the expectation of research, where previous year's maps did not include these resources to support all student learning.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers consistently check for understanding, provide opportunities for student reflection and utilize various assessments, rubrics and a grading policy that is aligned to the school's curricula.

Impact

Ongoing monitoring of student learning by students and teachers has allowed for transparent discussions and feedback about student outcomes which result in effective adjustments to lessons that meet students' varying needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers throughout the school use Fountas and Pinnell running records, unit assessments from ReadyGen and Go Math to provide students, teachers and families critical information on student achievement. The school also uses data from I-Ready, School Net and Performance Based Assessments from literacy and math programs to differentiate academic and performance tasks in order to address students' strengths and areas for improvement.
- Students and teachers utilize task-specific rubrics aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards to understand what students know and are able to do and the next steps for improvement. Feedback on student work products across bulletin boards throughout the school demonstrates actionable feedback that clearly defines students' "glows" and "grows." Students expressed that they appreciate receiving rubrics along with the task because it allows them the opportunity to work towards a level 4 or improve their work before it is submitted. Additionally, students also indicated that they always reflect on their own work, as well as their peers and make corrections before they turn in their final products to teachers, which were evident on work products reviewed.
- During class visits, teachers utilized various tools to track student understanding while circulating to monitor student partnerships or group tasks and address misconceptions as needed. In one classroom, the teacher used a student's writing task as a teachable moment to address the inaccurate use of compare and contrast transition words. The teacher posted the phrase written by the student and then modeled her own sentence and explained to students how the two sentences had different meanings based on the repositioning of the transition words and then required them to rewrite the sentence using the words appropriately. In another class, students who were having challenges with counting by 10's, were taken aside by the teacher for further explanation, modeling and support. Students were given additional scaffolds and manipulatives, such as counters and tens blocks to further support their understanding of the concept.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Through ongoing written communication and professional learning opportunities, school leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff. School staff has collectively created a culture for learning that communicates their high expectations through clear, specific feedback and guidance to all students.

Impact

Transparent feedback and communication from school leaders has led to differentiated professional learning that is facilitated and initiated by school staff where accountability is reciprocal among all members of the learning community. Through embedded structures, student learning is supported through ongoing feedback from teachers, thus allowing students to take responsibility for their own learning and be equipped with skills for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders clearly outline teacher's professional responsibilities and expectations related to teaching and learning through the staff handbook, memorandums and workshops that are presented by administrators and members of the professional development team. Teachers share the responsibility of ensuring that members of their team are equipped with content knowledge and strategies that support student learning through teacher initiated inter-visitations and discussions at the team level.
- Teachers engage in professional learning opportunities within the school and off site, to support observation feedback provided by school leaders and to offer their expertise to colleagues. Teachers shared that they feel more comfortable with content of a new grade due to the ongoing support they receive from their peers and the feedback they are provided during grade team meetings. Teachers also expressed that they are pleased with the shift in culture where teachers are now visiting each other's classrooms, sharing best practices and supporting one another so that all students across the school can improve.
- Across the school, teachers have worked collaboratively to develop various writing expectations and feedback structures. These allow students to receive ongoing feedback regarding their performance and progress, along with regular, small group or individual support for struggling students, English language learners, and students with disabilities that informs them of what they need to do to excel. Students take ownership and have pride in their work by ensuring they use feedback from previous tasks and assignment rubrics to follow the guidelines and meet all requirements. Students stated that they are very prepared for middle school and value the opportunities to reflect on their work, thus pushing them to be responsible for their own improvement.