



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Raymond York Elementary School

Elementary Q065

**103-22 99 Street
Queens
NY 11417**

Principal: Rafael Morales

**Date of review: January 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shirley Wheeler-Massey**

The School Context

P.S. 65 is an elementary school with 505 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 45% Hispanic, 4% White, 34% Asian, and 11% other students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 9% 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 92.8%.

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	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	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	Well Developed
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

Across the school, teachers and teacher leaders collaborate to analyze student work and data systematically, share best practices, and make critical decisions about student learning.

Impact

As a result of professional collaborations, teachers have begun to address gaps in their practice, which has increased student achievement. Leadership opportunities have promoted teacher voice in the decision-making process and have led to key instructional revisions that support student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- During an observed grade team meeting, third grade teachers were engaged in using student writing to determine trends within each class and across the grade and in making decisions as to how best to share their findings with their students. Through an analysis of a baseline performance writing tasks, teachers determined that students were having challenges organizing their writing, using linking words and staying focused. Teachers then prioritized the findings, with each teacher taking on the responsibility of creating an action plan for each selected area. Teachers expressed gratitude in having the opportunity to collaborate with their colleagues daily, especially those who teach students with disabilities (SWDs), who provide colleagues with a wealth of strategies for teaching struggling students.
- Teachers within grade teams align their practice to meet the needs of their students by consistently using the school's instructional focus of improving phonics instruction and students' reading and math fluency, in order to drive their instruction. Additionally, this year, teachers have begun to implement strategies developed during their meetings, such as infusing Balanced Literacy strategies into the ReadyGen reading program, which has proved to be successful, with 77% of their students showing progress in reading based on I-Ready baseline to mid-line reading diagnostic data.
- Throughout the school, teachers are taking on various leadership roles, such as those who represent their grades on the Instructional Rounds team. This team collaboratively develops structures that provide time for colleagues to visit each other's classrooms to observe selected pedagogical practices, to provide feedback, and to identify areas of strength and possibly gaps in practice across the school. Teachers articulated that these rounds guided the collaborative decision with school leaders to adjust their school's instructional focus from looking at questioning and discussion, to a more focused look at reading and phonics instruction. Teacher's also expressed that this shift in focus has truly addressed the teaching areas that they have been struggling with and that they are looking forward to it yielding further positive student outcomes.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While there is a collective understanding throughout the school of what students need in order to be successful, intentional extension tasks and multiple entry points are not always offered to students.

Impact

Although students are exposed to rich content across content areas through the support of the instructional shifts, there are missed opportunities to maximize student thinking and learning within their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teaching practices and student learning was aligned to the school's beliefs that "all students can learn", as well as the instructional focus of improving phonics instruction and language development. Within classrooms visited, students were given opportunities to share their ideas during small group, partner, and whole group discussions, using academic vocabulary, which was encouraged by teachers. Furthermore, students were provided with scaffolds and supports, such as visual aids on Smart boards, graphic organizers, and math manipulatives, as needed. Students used these tools to engage and complete academic tasks that required them to demonstrate their thinking. For example, in one classroom, students were using various science materials to extend their experiment on lifeboats by testing, graphing their predictions, and sharing their findings within small groups, using science vocabulary.
- During class visits, teachers were observed pulling small groups based on data and on their specific needs during lessons. In many instances, students were provided differentiated tasks or assignments that provided them entrance into the content or lesson and were using text-based evidence within their written and verbal responses to defend a claim. In one classroom, students were reviewing text features to better understand a text, while the teacher posed questions that encouraged them to think further about the objective, such as "How are the text features in this text different from the one we just unlocked?" and "Explain how this information is helpful in understanding the text." Students engaged in discussions that included them initiating the elaboration of other students' ideas and making connections across texts and to the world.
- While students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities were consistently given opportunities to work on varying academic tasks during class lessons, extension assignments and activities were not always offered or were sometimes generic and not specifically chosen and applied for all students. For instance, in one third-grade classroom, students were working differentiated math tasks based on their specific needs. Some students were using iPads to complete fraction problems, while others were given more simplified problems to solve using fraction pieces and visual aids. As the teacher circulated the classroom and observed some students completing the task with ease and able to explain their strategies, she immediately provided them with more challenging problems. However, in another classroom, all of the students were working on an individual writing task with the support of a graphic organizer and descriptive word list to guide their writing, preventing those who were ready for working without scaffolds to do so and write creatively on their own.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff effectively implement a Common Core aligned curricula that integrates the instructional shifts. Teachers utilize student work and data to develop and refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

The school's collaborative efforts to implement and refine their standards-based curricula, has led to coherence in instruction across the school. Ongoing, careful review of student work and assessment data ensure that all students are being exposed to engaging learning experiences that meet their learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers are using the ReadyGen reading program, Go Math, Foss Science and the core scope and sequence for social studies and science. Within and across grades and content areas, teachers are incorporating the instructional shifts such as citing and using text-based evidence to support a claim, engaging students in debates, promoting students' listening and speaking skills, and having students solve multi-step problems.
- Curricula and lesson plans reflect teachers' planning of tasks that meet diverse students' needs based on assessment data. Teachers intentionally assign tasks based on where students are or specific identifications, such as English Language Learners and support, below, on, and above-level enrichment tasks. Academic tasks are designed to expose students to the same content, but through differentiated academic tasks that provide all students' entrance to the lesson's content. For example, struggling fifth graders who are working on narrative writing are given graphic organizers and word banks to jump start their writing, while students who fall in the middle group receive a word bank suggestion list, while proficient writers are charged to work on their projects using their own sensory detail words and without any supports.
- After close analysis of last year's data as well as information obtained from their instructional rounds, school leaders and staff decided that they needed to make some critical adjustments to the ReadyGen program in order to close the gaps within the program. Through its analysis, the school determined that ReadyGen lacked strong phonics support and opportunities for students to engage in independent reading. Therefore, the school extended the construct of their literacy block to include phonics for grades kindergarten through grade five, incorporated a more structured writing approach and embedded some aspects of Balanced Literacy into the ReadyGen program. Additionally, the school elected to lengthen the units of study from trying to cover content in one day to using a three-day focus now to ensure that teachers are able to cover the content of each unit.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school utilizes a variety of assessment strategies to create a transparent picture of student mastery and to provide students with regular opportunities to reflect on their learning. (2.2 a, c)

Impact

The result of teachers' varied assessment practices has led to a deeper awareness of students' needs precipitating both effective curricula and instructional adjustments and more targeted feedback increasing student' understanding of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers are using performance based writing assessments, unit assessments from ReadyGen and Go Math, and the I-Ready diagnostic tool, to track and determine student learning. Teachers utilize rubrics to understand where students are and what they need to do to improve. Similarly, students utilize rubrics and TAGEE (turn around the question, answer, give evidence from the text, explain) or RAFT (restate, answer, for example, tie it together) strategies with their writing to identify their strengths and next steps for writing. Teacher feedback made in students' portfolios and on bulletin boards, reflects clear and specific strengths and areas for improvement, which students shared, are used to set their writing goals. During instruction, students are encouraged to reference their goals, which are posted on all students' desks, to track whether they are working towards achieving their individual goals. Additionally, students are expected to articulate to their teachers where they are in realizing their goals.
- During visits to classrooms, teachers checked for understanding by circulating their classrooms to pose probing questions, pulling small groups to support struggling learners addressing misconceptions of content, as needed, and requiring students to reference their goals as they worked through tasks. For example, in one classroom, the teacher observed a students' use of an incorrect strategy to solve a subtraction problem and provided him a correct model so he could compare models to determine his strategy errors. The teacher worked with the student individually and walked him through the problem step-by-step, so as to allow him to figure out how his errors caused him to get the incorrect solution.
- Throughout the school, students are using Common Core Learning Standard, I-Can statements and checklists after assessments to determine where they are and set goals for English Language Arts, math and writing, each month. Students expressed that being able to write their own goals and use I-Can statements for their progress reports lets them know exactly what they are strong in and in what areas they need to improve. In discussion with students, they were able to articulate all of their different goals and explain the rationale of why they are focusing on a particular area.

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

Ongoing and effective communication with teachers has led to more ownership and joint responsibility of improving pedagogy and student learning across the school. Supportive partnerships with families have created a school culture that ensures students are positioned on a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- In order to support teachers' pedagogical growth, school administrators provide transparent feedback that clearly outlines teachers' strengths and next steps for improvement. Additionally, professional development and trainings, which are aligned to teachers' needs, are often facilitated on-site by teacher leaders. This year, the school has engaged teachers in instructional rounds, where selected teachers visit each other's classrooms, observe a practice, provide feedback, and identify gaps in practice and school-wide trends. The result of this practice assisted in shifting the school's focus to include a balanced literacy approach in teaching reading and adding more time for students to read independently.
- At the beginning of the school year, school leaders provide professional development to teachers regarding the new citywide instructional expectations and how those expectations align to the Common Core Learning Standards and require necessary curricula revisions. School leaders also disseminate instructional memos to teachers to apprise them of changes in expectations as it relates to data analysis and their students' progress. Teachers are expected to collaboratively decide how they will shift curricula, academic tasks, and their instructional practices to address gaps identified in student learning.
- Teachers provide parents with weekly newsletters with resources and examples of family activities to support and reinforce learning at home. Furthermore, the principal generates a school-wide newsletter that informs parents of the school's progress towards goals and various workshops available for parents. Also, families are provided with monthly progress reports which include students' input using their I-Can statements and progress toward achievement of goals. Parents are expected to respond and provide feedback on progress reports and if required, request resources they need to assist their child at home.
- The school hosts an annual "Back to School and Meet the Teacher Night", where teachers discuss academic expectations, school policies, Common Core Learning Standards resources, and the school's revised grade-specific promotional criteria. Parents, as well, benefit from the partnerships offered at this Community Learning School, in which the Office of Adult Continuing Education provides English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to families, along with the parent coordinator and members of the Parent Teacher Association who organize "Coffee and Conversation" follow-up ESL classes on Saturdays. Parents shared that this has had a tremendous impact on non-speaking English parents who are now able to better communicate with their children, understand what they are learning, and support them at home.