



# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**P.S. 068 Cambridge**

**Elementary Q068**

**59-09 St. Felix Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11385**

**Principal: Anne Marie Scalfaro**

**Date of review: December 18, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

## The School Context

PS 68 is an elementary school with 777 students from grade Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 83% Hispanic, 9% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.70%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Proficient</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Within inquiry-based teams, teachers examine student work and data in alignment with the school's instructional focus and goals. Systems for leadership building provide ways for teachers to have a voice regarding decisions about teaching practices and curricula revisions.

### Impact

Improved pedagogy and collaboration has been a result of teacher team work. Collaborative leadership has led to improved student outcomes, leading to the achievement of goals for individual and groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams articulate the way they create and revise curricula to ensure effective integration of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts into teaching practices across the grades and content areas. The teams have been working on aligning curriculum maps to the school goals. Revisions were carried out to strengthen vocabulary development by adding visual cues, word ladders and synonym and antonym rings for groups of students. As a result of these revisions, teachers stated that they have seen richer student discussion and more focused interaction and engagement since these strategies were put in place. Teachers are most proud of their collaborative efforts to diagnosis students' needs and address the needs within their framework of instructional practices.
- Teacher teams effectively implement systems to monitor a variety of student data like running records and unit benchmarks that inform instruction. Teams look at student work in alignment with data results and then revise plans as needed. Teams created pre and post-tests in math for the Envisions curriculum that are more closely aligned to the standards and each mathematical domain. The item analysis from the state tests was also revisited and aligned to the math curriculum for better time components when teaching specific topics like, Number and Operations in Base 10 and Number and Operation in fractions. As a result of the re-alignment, teachers state that topics are better addressed in a relevant and timely manner, allowing students to deeply process new topics that were once only addressed at the end of the year.
- School leaders and teachers offer specific examples of teacher leadership that indicate how teachers and mentors play an important role in school level decision making. Teams have collaborative conversations to help staff develop a better understanding about teaching and learning, which has been an ongoing process that directly contributes to student achievement. Teams expressed pride of their collaborative efforts to have a voice in decisions about curriculum and instruction. Two of their most successful accomplishments have been to create a student template for creating an effective introduction and conclusion for a persuasive essay and revamping the math curriculum to align to the standards, per grade.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

The school uses data from common assessments in literacy, writing and math to track student progress which informs curricula and instructional planning. However, the use of checks for understanding is uneven across grades and classes.

### Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through data analysis as well as instruction are used to guide adjustments in tasks and units. However, the tracking process for lesson revisions and testing results are not always meeting all students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes common assessments like Teachers College running records, baseline assessments, Envisions unit tests and on-demand writing assessments. These assessments provide information on student performance, however, the feedback provided to students about assessment results and rubrics is difficult for them to explain and carry out their next learning steps. In addition, the feedback is not actionable for all subgroups of students; therefore, some students are unclear of the gains that need to be accomplished. For example, when students were asked to share feedback on their work they mentioned adding more details in their writing or using capital letters, but they found it hard to discuss specific writing skills to help them improve their proficiency.
- Teachers monitor students' progress in academic intervention services (AIS) and English Language Learner (ELL) programs. Results are reviewed at the core team and with individual classroom teachers. At this time, there is limited transparency around the effectiveness of each program because they are supplemental in nature, rather than having succinct goals that can be ascertained from the learning of each separate curriculum.
- Across classrooms, literacy teachers use rubrics, peer feedback, self-assessment checklist and next steps written by teachers to determine progress and make adjustments to tasks. Adjustments observed included, additional guided reading groups, use of technology, graphic organizers and leveled texts. At this time, however, there is limited information regarding progress being made by the school between the adjustment of curricula and instruction and the proficiency of students with disabilities and English language learners.
- A review of teachers' conference notes indicated that formative assessments may lead to instructional adjustments in curriculum, but instructional revisions like re-teaching concepts using research-based findings such as analyzing pedagogical practices and then creating a model signature lesson or having learning expectations resemble real-life applications were not available in the majority of classrooms observed.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are addressed in all curricula. Remedial activities, as well as extension for higher order thinking, are consistently emphasized for all learners across content areas of literacy and writing.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions provide next steps for students and build coherence around instructional practices. Across grades and content areas, unit tasks encourage students to think and learn at their own developmental rate.

### Supporting Evidence

- Literacy/writing units of study integrate the Common Core Standards and instructional shifts across content areas. The Teachers College Reading and Writing curriculum aligns writing genres with reading topics so that themed writing is strategically planned. Teachers posit that this has allowed for more of an “authentic teaching process” to take place. Results from lower grade assessments results show that English Language Learners (ELLs) have improved in awareness of academic vocabulary and identification of words in complex texts due to a stronger word base and the ability to connect synonyms with new words.
- Curriculum maps provide evidence that the school crafts higher -order thinking tasks through instructional resources from Teachers College, Common Core Standards and Engage NY. In first grade, based on Teachers College running records, materials adapted from these resources, like transitional book bags for each student and guided reading in small groups, have yielded results. Currently, 83.8% of first graders have improved at least one reading level since September.
- Unit plans in literacy, writing and math illustrate multiple ways to present academic tasks with a variety of scaffolds for all students. For example, in one class students were working on citing evidence from a text and were using graphic organizers and a sight word list to accomplish their assignment. Students state that these supports help them read more fluidly and give them confidence as a reader.

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

There is a common understanding of how students learn best that is supported by the instructional shifts and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers provide instructional supports like questioning and discussion and use a variety of entry points to support all learners.

### Impact

Across classrooms there is evidence of a variety of curricula extensions and learning tools to assist students in developing meaningful work products and promote deep reasoning in tasks and work across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Instruction, outcomes from formative assessments and teacher practices, reflect and support school-wide beliefs about how students learn best. Administrators articulate how those beliefs are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and are aligned to the school's curricula and shaped by teacher team input. In classrooms visited, students responded to teachers' questions and had opportunities to discuss with peers their own curiosities and wonderings. For example, in one class students were referencing their non-fiction books and reading a chunk of text to determine new information acquired. They shared out this information with peers from their post-its that noted "I learned" and "I am thinking about". Students were able to comment on their classmates' findings and offer an opinion of approval or next steps.
- Across the majority of classrooms observed, learning activities are derived from standards-based curricula and reflect school leadership's embedded philosophy about optimal student learning opportunities. In the principal's office there is a sign that reads, "If a child cannot learn by the way we teach then we need to start teaching the way the child can learn". Plans for units are well-structured with appropriate pacing and time allocations. In one lower grade classroom, there were artifacts that students could use to figure out difficult words. A strategy was to, "stretch the snake's superpowers". Students were able to explain how this strategy has helped them and the teacher stated this scaffold has helped all students increase their decoding skills.
- Teachers can explain how specific teaching strategies like incorporating student mentors for writing or assigning math group goals for each task, address the needs of individual students, including ELLs, students with disabilities, and highest performers by sharing how tasks are designed with examples of ways student learning is supported or enriched. For example, in one class, students were using a student-friendly narrative checklist to follow an illustrated diagram, to check their writing for sequential order, picture detail, character action and feelings and details that hook the reader. Results of this strategy have yielded writing gains based on improvement in focus, organization and framing conclusions.
- To increase math proficiency levels, problem-solving days have been incorporated in the updated math pacing calendars. Students work on rigorous math problems and discuss strategies like talking prompt charts, problem solving charts and rubric usage to solve them. In one classroom, students were dividing decimals by decimals and were encouraged to work in groups to review the strategies and solve their multi-step word problem challenge. The teacher stated that through this type of instruction, she has seen progress in math proficiency through exit slips and student conferences.

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

The school's staff consistently communicates high expectations and offers next steps to help families make appropriate choices for their children. Teacher teams reflect on their work so that feedback and guidance can be offered to students to assist with their next level of learning.

### Impact

High expectations are carved into all systems of the school's workings, thus offering strong direction towards student progress and college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school provides supports to students like goal letters that include individual student benchmarks with timelines and specific guidelines for behavior through the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) which informs students and their families about their social and emotional status and college and career readiness. One parent celebrated the goal letters by saying that, "The school gives us the opportunity to know where our children need to be academically and how to help them at home". The principal states that as a result of PBIS, students are more respectful to staff and each other, parents are well-informed about community workshops and gatherings and the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) shows that negative student incidents are significantly lower than this time last year. Furthermore, academic progress and quality of homework has improved as a result of parents being involved and attending learning workshops so that they are able to help their children at home.
- Teacher teams are focused on the school's mission of helping every student reach their full capacity by creating an environment where learning is purposeful and accessible for every student. Parents state that ongoing and succinct advisements are available throughout the year. They appreciate the availability of teachers and the level of accountability teachers possess to help students gain grade appropriate proficiency levels. Parents appreciate the principal's open door policy and the programs that are available to students like the Community Based Organization of Greater Ridgewood and their work with students on homework, art and physical education. Students make it clear that the school acts like their second home and that they feel emotionally prepared for next levels of learning.
- Parent workshops keep parents informed on the importance of classwork, homework and exam expectations in order to meet the Common Core Learning Standards and middle school preparation. Parents shared that the guidance counselor and teachers offer advisements and supports and send regular updates on their child's progress via email, one to one conferences, phone calls, monthly reports, newsletters, report cards and student feedback.