Quality Review
Report

2014-2015

The Jean Paul Richter School

Q081

559 Cypress Avenue
Queens
NY 11385

Principal: Romy Diamond

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Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan

The School Context

PS 81 is an elementary school with 1,026 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 87% Hispanic, 5% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 23% 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 96.3%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Focus**	**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	**Additional Findings**	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

The school has established a culture for learning by consistently communicating cohesive high academic expectations for both teachers and students to achieve those expectations through the implementation of the Danielson Framework and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Accountability and collaboration are structures that support the school's high expectations for families, staff and students creating a concise bridge between next steps for learning and student achievement to ensure that students including high-need subgroups own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Ongoing feedback to families is surfaced in monthly newsletters, professional learning calendars and parent workshops creating scholarly discourse that reinforces the strong culture for learning that resonates throughout the school.

- Professional needs based inter-visitations; classroom observations and timely feedback from classroom visits discussed at teacher team meetings to norm practices create a strong accountability structure for meeting expectations.

- Teacher teams have set high level expectations for student feedback, within all subgroups, and have created student friendly rubrics and student reflection sheets that hold students accountable for review of their work, specific next steps and timely follow up planning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

The school's choice of curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Curriculum maps indicate that challenging tasks are developed with the assistance of resources from Time for Kids, Six Flags Reading and the use of interactive activity tables for lower school students. Most students have access to curricula and are introduced to challenging tasks.

Impact

Although the tasks are in place, some of the lessons are teacher directed and student autonomy is a process that is beginning to take shape. -. Furthermore, student work is used to plan and refine academic assignments, but rigorous work is seen unevenly across the grades.

Supporting Evidence

- The reading, writing and math units of study are closely connected with the CCLS instructional shifts. Successful strategies include text-based responses, use of a matrix to uncover gaps in learning and problem-solving through reading and writing, however, some students are not exposed to these extensions due to their proficiency levels.

- Lesson plans in all content areas reinforce higher order thinking and represent strategies, based on student choice to complete tasks. Students can choose from question prompts, group work, selection of topics and extensions to the lesson when work is completed. At this time most students can discuss their next steps, but some are unfamiliar with the protocols.

- Curriculum maps and end of unit tasks provide evidence that the school develops academic tasks with activities that challenge students through the adaptation of instructional materials from the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Common Core library and content area scope and sequence resources.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
There is a universal philosophy throughout the school based on how students learn best that is aligned to the Danielson Framework so that the needs of all learners are met**.**

Impact
School wide practices, including questioning techniques and scaffolds, can be seen across grades and student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and involvement.

Supporting Evidence
- In a kindergarten class students were eagerly writing in their source books while the teacher was completing a conference record sheet to indicate their progress. Students were able to articulate the teacher's expectations of the task and the tools they needed to use to, "be a good writer".

- In a collaborative team teaching class, students were in flexible groups according to their baseline assessment and students were able to talk about why they were in a particular group and what resources would help them to improve.

- In a small setting classroom students were working in math groups and able to explain their goals and next steps. Some students were using interactive computers while others were grouped with the teacher.

- Second graders were writing about characters' feelings while engaging in visual prompts, partner work, turn and talk picture walks and written prompts.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

  Across classrooms teachers use common assessments, student work and checks for understanding to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas and adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level.

Impact

  Teachers use ongoing checks for understanding and deliver actionable feedback thereby making effective adjustments to adjust curricula and instruction and meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, rubrics are aligned to the school's grading policy and upper grade students state that their teacher's feedback helps them know their strengths and they are able to plan for next steps that have led to improvement in their learning process.

- The school utilizes common assessments in all content areas including Performance Based Assessments, Diagnostic Reading Assessments and Go Math end of unit tests which provide authentic information on student performance and progress.

- Students explained that they have a voice in what resources they use to check for understanding. Based on students' requests, teachers collaborated with students and designed a writing rubric that is comprehensive and user friendly. As a result, students state that it is," easier for them to get good grades because they know exactly how to apply the rules for writing and exceed expectations".

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers engage in structured professional collaborations on teams and consistently analyze assessment data and student work so that plans are adjusted to meet students' needs**.**

Impact
A focus on shared responsibilities has built leadership capacity and has resulted in strong reflection of instructional practices to improve student achievement and student progress in writing.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher leaders, who represent each grade, meet weekly and voluntarily with grade teams to review the school's instructional focus and monitor grade goals in alignment with teacher practice.

- Teachers shared that they are able to make decisions about curriculum and unit plan changes based on data reviews and that the decisions are supported by the administration. For example, through collaborative inquiry the team researched different ways to support the English Language Arts curriculum. Findings indicated that the team needed to better align the curriculum to make the information being taught more relevant to students. As a results of the team's work there was a school wide proficiency growth of 34%

- Teacher teams analyze their lessons and better align them to the CCLS utilizing questions from Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Work generated from teams has made information more relevant for students yielding positive results. Based on a reorganization of writing needs one fifth grade class increased from 2% of the class on level to 65% of the class on level. Teachers state that their success is due to strong collaboration and collegiality.