



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Judge Charles J. Vallone

Elementary School Q085

**23-70 31st STREET
Queens
NY 11105**

Principal: Ann Gordon-Chang

**Date of review: February 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rajeev Bector**

The School Context

Judge Charles J. Vallone is an elementary school with 583 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 5% Black, 31% Hispanic, 39% White, 20% Asian students, and 5% other students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.1%.

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	Developing
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	Developing
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism to the entire staff and provide training to support those expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

By consistently communicating high expectations to faculty, students, and families, the school creates a high degree of staff accountability and successful partnerships with families that engender a college and career mindset.

Supporting Evidence

- There is a culture of mutual accountability in the school. School leaders hold high expectations of staff regarding data analysis and feedback, professionalism, and communication; the staff, in turn, hold the administration accountable for providing training and supports to meet those expectations. School leaders hold teachers accountable through frequent observations, provide detailed feedback on how to improve their pedagogy, and recommend specific online modules in ARIS Learn and other tangible resources such as mentoring minds flip charts.
- The school maintains ongoing communication with families to deepen their understanding of college and career readiness by articulating academic content and behavior, post-secondary and career awareness, and financial and civic literacy expectations at each grade level. School leaders share progress reports and student-level assessment data generated by blended learning programs such as I-Ready. They communicate with parents via a monthly newsletter and through the school website for school updates and policies; and teachers use ClassDojo, an online tool for engaging parents and improving student behavior by providing positive feedback. Moreover, parent workshops are held regularly on topics such as understanding educational accountability, grade-level curriculum and assessment expectations, literacy, Common Core Learning Standards, accessing community and support services, and using technology.
- Parents speak passionately about the school, and have successfully partnered with the school to support students. They state that they communicate with other parent association members via Facebook, and with the school leadership via Twitter. They collaborate with school leadership, and as a result the school now offers a wide variety of programs it did not previously offer: the Global Language program; Studio in a School; the Audubon program; swimming through a partnership with the local Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA); a cooking program where families can cook together; an architectural program; fundraisers, such as Talent Night; and an enrichment program every Friday, where all students participate in activities such as chess, music, visual arts, theatre, and sports. The school holds Award Nights, and students are recognized as student of the month and mathematician of the month. Parents mention that they can meet with teachers every Tuesday, and that teachers show "incredible dedication" in helping their children academically and in providing social and emotional support. One parent stated that his son did not have a desire to read, but his vocabulary improved after the teacher worked with him.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies, such as questioning and routines, do not consistently engage students intellectually or provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of higher-order thinking and participation.

Impact

The inconsistent use of multiple entry points results in an emphasis on task completion. As a result, not all students are able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of key concepts through high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has invested heavily in technology such as laptops, Smart-boards, and in a new science lab. Across classrooms, many students work independently on laptops, using I-Ready software by Curriculum Associates. While the software-based lessons provide structure that supports the building of conceptual understanding in reading and mathematics, these activities are done independently by students and do not support student-to-student discussion. Across classrooms, there were few opportunities for students to build a shared understanding of content through collaboration and productive struggle.
- In some classes teachers were able to intellectually engage students by providing differentiated assignments in various learning stations. However, in other classrooms, teachers asked rapid-fire, low-level Depth-of-Knowledge questions, did not provide adequate wait-time, and did not encourage students to respond to one another. For instance, in a third grade Integrated Co-Teaching class, the teacher repeated a comprehension question four times in rapid sequence, and when no one responded, told students to “just pay attention.” In other classrooms, questions posed included, “What is a topic sentence? What does it contain?” and “If we put $1/4^{\text{th}}$ there, will it be longer, shorter, or the same size?” with no follow-up discussions and opportunities to explain thinking.
- The school’s instructional focus is writing across grades and subjects. While in some classrooms students cited textual evidence and provided page references, across other classrooms student writing was limited to the completion of worksheets and hand-outs, or focused on recall and summarization. For instance, in a third grade classroom, students wrote essays on narrative texts that were primarily general statement and plot summary, with no analysis.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Although school leaders and teachers align curricula to both content and Common Core Learning Standards, the implementation of instructional shifts in curricula varied across grades. Academic tasks emphasize rigor inconsistently for all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

While curricula, across grades and subjects, are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, higher-order thinking skills and scaffolds and supports are inconsistently utilized; in addition, differing grade-level curricular decisions create a lack of coherence. As a result, all learners, and especially ELLs and students with disabilities, do not always have opportunities to access the curricula and engage meaningfully with the content.

Supporting Evidence

- Students read a variety of informational and explanatory texts and complete performance-based tasks and end-of-unit assessments in English Language Arts, Social Studies and science. However, on the 2013-2014 New York City school survey report, only 67% of teachers indicate that students often use evidence from text in written assignments and understand academic vocabulary, and only 60% indicate that students often use other students as a resource for understanding content and checking their thinking.
- The school makes a concerted effort to include differentiation strategies in some curriculum maps. The curriculum maps list suggestions for tiered assignments and school leaders encourage teachers to use existing resources, such as the ReadyGen strategies handbook, and Mentoring Minds differentiated instruction and critical thinking flipbooks. However, explicit scaffolds and supports, extensions, and strategies to engage ELLs and students with disabilities are inconsistently utilized.
- A review of curricular documents indicated a lack of coherence. For example, the first grade ReadyGen curriculum mentions formative assessments that engage students in cognitively demanding tasks, such as writing an opinion piece explaining which story they liked better, retelling a story using time-order words, explaining what they learned by synthesizing information from two different texts, and choosing a scene from a story and adding details using sensory words. However, the fifth grade curriculum indicates formative assessments that are limited to “If ... then statements” and “Independent writing practice” across all units of study.
- Curricula and academic tasks are differentiated in some content areas, make cross-curricular connections, and provide Response to Intervention support; however, teachers indicate that the curriculum maps are “just a skeleton” and are not refined periodically based on student work and data. As a result, while teachers adjust instruction for groups of students based on the results of I-Ready and Go Math assessments, they do not consistently adjust curricula in response to student needs.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments across grades and subject areas, and teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and monitoring of student progress to provide targeted, actionable feedback.

Impact

By consistently using ongoing checks for understanding, analyzing grade-wide trends, and disaggregating data for individual students, teachers are able to make adjustments for groups of students to meet their learning needs and to provide actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer several types of assessments to monitor student progress, such as formative assessments, performance tasks, benchmark assessments, summative end-of-unit assessments, and state assessments. Data analysis of these assessments yields actionable next steps for improving student outcomes, and for making pedagogical adjustments. Teacher teams provided a concrete example: they administered a performance task, examined the Common Core Learning Standards aligned problem, and then used this information to modify student groupings when teaching the next lesson.
- Teachers set goals and learning targets for students, check for understanding, provide specific feedback using rubrics and written criteria, and circulate to support struggling learners. Across classrooms, students were able to self-assess, and articulate how they knew they were doing a task correctly. One student indicated that teachers provide a rubric before assigning essays and the rubric outlines expectations for getting a good grade. Another stated, "Our teacher gives comments on our essays. She tells us kind comments and next steps. She writes a good description and explains what we should do next."
- School leaders indicate that benchmark assessments show school-specific, grade-specific, and student-specific data. They regularly monitor different assessments from I-ready, Ready Gen and Go Math and ensure that teachers are checking for understanding using rubrics and checklists. School leaders examined the results of the New York State English Language Arts assessment and the data analysis revealed that third graders were struggling in writing. As a result, writing, and particularly informational writing, became the school-wide instructional focus.

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze student assessment data, identify trends and patterns in student work, and adjust their pedagogy to support student progress. In addition, distributed leadership structures support student learning.

Impact

The methodical collection and analysis of assessment results has directly impacted student learning by strengthening the professional capacity of teachers. Well-defined team structures give teachers voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams, such as the Professional Development Committee, Gifted and Talented Teachers Team, and the Common Core Learning Standards Committee meet monthly and grade-level teams meet weekly to analyze grade-level and student-level data and trends, and to discuss formative assessment results from I-Ready and Think-Central. They share strategies for scaffolding content for students via iPad apps to review multiplication and division skills, and online resources such as Starrmatica, Mathletics, Mathbuddies, and I-Ready. In addition, teacher teams choose performance-based tasks from Engage NY for providing test preparation, and exemplars, word problems, and open-ended questions to add to daily routines.
- Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work products, and modify the next round of assessments or interventions for groups of students. For instance, after assigning a non-fiction research project, teachers determined that students needed additional support in note taking and paraphrasing. Consequently, they incorporated these skills in their lessons moving forward. Teachers also use the I-Ready student profile detail reports to take a critical look at which skills and concepts individual students have mastered, and their next steps for instruction.
- School leadership makes all curricular and instructional decisions in collaboration with teacher teams focused on groups of students, thereby giving teachers a voice in key decisions. School leaders partner with teachers to examine assessment data and make purposeful decisions, such as choosing test preparation materials, choosing books for book study, and purchasing instructional materials to use in classrooms.