



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Seneca School

24Q088

**60-85 Catalpa Avenue
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Robert Quintana

**Date of review: November 20, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

The School Context

PS 88 is an elementary school with 1,110 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 55% Hispanic, 37% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 16% 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 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	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	Focus	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

High expectations are clearly and consistently messaged to staff and aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching during professional development, one to one conferences and other forms of communication. Performance keeps families well apprised of student progress, school events and plans for ongoing college and career readiness.

Impact

The school has a system of accountability for high expectations and offers strong partnerships with families to support student progress towards high leverage goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school creates ongoing events, workshops and monthly meetings that are communicated via newsletters, the school website and Sunday evening phone blasts. Parents are especially grateful for the school website that is in 50 different languages, and has curricula as well as cultural information updated and timely. Parents state that, “the school really cares about our children because there is a level of sincerity and commitment from the staff that you cannot measure”.
- The school has clearly defined standards for professional development. The staff is being trained individually on aspects of the Danielson Framework. For example, the principal has developed a practice where he meets with teachers to share data results of state assessments so that teachers can plan based on their instructional strengths. This practice has developed a greater awareness of skills sets amongst the staff, ensuring that learning, for all sub-groups of students, yields positive results.
- Staff members implement effective strategies like inquiry and higher order thinking that are aligned to next steps of learning so that students are challenged to meet expectations. A clear lens into this practice was evident in a kindergarten integrated co-teaching class where students were engaged in peer reading partnerships, and where teachers illustrated strong modeling procedures to determine strategies that readers use to read new words.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Assessments are aligned to curricula and student learning outcomes are based on modifying instruction at the classroom and team level.

Impact

Systems are in place to offer students instructional feedback, and checks for understanding lead to effective adjustments in instructional practices and tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes common assessments such as Item skills analysis, Fountas and Pinnell running records to determine students reading levels, teacher made math assessments and Think Central which provide information on student achievement and progress.
- Teachers implement three different types of feedback through Grade CAM, and determine which students' skills need re-teaching or alternate methods of instruction. At this time, although feedback is available not all learning needs are met because some students cannot articulate their next steps.
- Teachers filter the ARIS Data System to determine student proficiency and to create small groups. Based on students' degree of proficiency, New York State scores indicated that 16.8% of the 3rd grade is proficient or above in math. Rubrics are introduced to support students' learning, however some students are not able to state how they use rubrics to improve their skills.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Higher-order skills are emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Academic tasks push student thinking across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans in content areas indicate various types of academic assignments with scaffolds for all students. For example, one lesson included extending thinking and complex reasoning while students searched for text based responses in alignment with the school's instructional focus.
- Units of study and the Arts integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts across content areas. Formalized strategies include multi-step problem solving, justifying claims, classifying information and determining two or more main ideas of a text. Students agree that their assignments help them have a clearer picture of what work will be required for the next level of proficiency and beyond their current grade.
- Lesson plans in content areas include a choice of strategies for students to use for completing academic tasks that require higher order thinking. Strategic choices include use of transitional phrases, discussion prompts and cause and effect cues. In one kindergarten class, students were able to list strategies they learned to help sound out words.

Findings

Teaching practices provide consistent supports, including purposeful small group work and strong student engagement, creating multiple entry points into the curricula so that all learners are challenged.

Impact

Throughout the grades, mindful decisions about curricula encourage students to develop work products and take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In all classes visited, students responded to open ended questions; student groups were flexible, and extensions to the lessons challenged all learners. As seen in a third grade class, groups of students were using math prompts like: *I can explain and justify my thinking*, and *The reason I use this strategy is because*, while the teacher circulated around the room taking low-inference notes on their progress. Students were then able to critique and evaluate their peers' responses using a rubric.
- A review of students' work folders indicated work in citing text based evidence, stating claims and counter claims, peer to peer reviews and identifying text features that contribute to an author's style of writing.
- In the majority of classes teachers can discuss why lessons are being planned and what standards are addressed to the lesson. They can also articulate the rationale behind the focus of the lesson and how the data connects students and small groupings. This sense of coherence has produced student work products that demonstrate higher order thinking and robust responses.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings A consistent practice of this school is for teachers to use common assessments to plan lessons, track student progress and determine successful methods of instruction while making purposeful decisions about curricula and teaching methods.

Impact The work of teacher teams has improved teaching practices and student results on assessments. Student learning has improved based on achieved goals.

Supporting Evidence

- One teacher team is analyzing students’ writing for stronger evidence of citing informational text, robust details, improved sentence structure and accuracy in the mechanics of writing. Inquiry work led them to create assessments that would be closely aligned to students’ tasks. As a result, ReadyGen formative assessments showed that proficiency levels for students who were below or approaching the standards increased by 20%.
- A vertical teacher team posits that through leadership flexibility and being able to make decisions on instructional changes they incorporated resources to support the writing program. *Time for Kids* and *EngageNY* were two supports utilized to better align unit tasks with the CCLS. Teachers agree that these decisions enabled them to create challenging writing tasks for all sub-groups of students.
- Teacher teams review the results from New York state tests to modify instruction and collaborate on ideas to adjust teaching practices so that areas in need of improvement are addressed. For example, during a team meeting observed, a teacher shared the use of a multi-step multiplication rubric that was adjusted to create clearer expectations for students.