



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Horace Mann**

**Elementary School Q090**

**86-50 109 Street  
Queens  
NY 11418**

**Principal: Adrienne Ubertini**

**Date of review: February 24, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

## The School Context

The Horace Mann School is an elementary school with 890 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 8% Black, 54% Hispanic, 4% White, and 34% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.3%.

## 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>Focus</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>Well Developed</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Teachers use rubrics and assessments that are aligned with the curricula and clearly capture evidence of student learning. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Curricula-aligned assessments and rubrics enable teachers to make ongoing instructional adjustments and provide actionable feedback to students. As a result, most teachers and students are clear on students' next steps and students take ownership of their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students receive a variety of feedback from both teachers and peers; the feedback is accurate, specific, and timely, and advances learning. Across all classes, students were aware of their goals, and student work was assessed on a rubric by teachers, peers, or by students themselves. During the student meeting, students discussed their best work and demonstrated a keen understanding of their strengths, areas of struggle, and next steps for growth.
- Teachers' assessment practices are strengthened by the use of re-teaching, scaffolding, using flexible-grouping, using visual cues, and providing options for demonstrating understanding via differentiation of process and product. Students are invited to approach a learning task through multiple ways and modalities, such as by completing graphic organizers, writing expository essays, discussing the content with their peers, or by reflecting and generating higher-order questions. By providing a variety of options, teachers are able to develop a holistic understanding of each student, and encourage all learners to showcase their understanding through their strengths.
- Teachers visibly and continuously monitor student understanding and make the necessary adjustments. They use checklists for assessing different criteria for each student as they circulate among groups, with notations such as "RT" to indicate the traits that need to be re-taught to students and "A" to note the students that have achieved mastery.
- Assessments and rubrics are aligned with the curricula. An analysis of student work provides teachers actionable information for each student. They then sort students based on needed interventions and provide targeted support to students. Teachers' conference notes and assessment analysis paint a clear picture of students' conceptual understanding as well as provide more granular data regarding student achievement across grades and subjects, and this information informs next steps and action plans.

## Area of Focus

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

While the curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts throughout most subject areas, the school is working towards making strategic decisions to lead to vertical alignment across all grades and subject areas. Student work products, performance based assessments, baselines, and achievement data are used to plan and refine curricula and most academic tasks.

### Impact

The alignment of curricula to standards and assessments has impacted pedagogy at the school. Teachers utilize informational texts, encourage the use of textual evidence, and promote higher-order thinking skills for all students by using a variety of resources and supports. As a result, students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work to provide options for comprehension and for expression and communication through strategies such as graphic organizers, turn and talks, debate, use of manipulatives, journal entries, and Depth of Knowledge questions. There are supports explicitly indicated for English language learners and students with disabilities in maps, such as cueing students by providing a clear focus of the lesson in student-friendly terms, and the use of manipulatives and visual vocabulary cards containing pictures and words. However, the school continues to prioritize standards to cover depth instead of breadth.
- While the school utilizes ReadyGen, DOK questions, Go Math, Wilson Foundations, real world learning experiences connected to the curricula, Engage NY and online programs such as Odyssey and Pebbles to support the implementation of the standards, additional work is needed to ensure that science and social studies maps are created. Currently social studies is taught through its embedded thematic units in ReadyGen and FOSS kits are used for the science program.
- The school is continuing to ensure that English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged by examining student work and data for these groups, refining curricula and academic tasks, and formulating next steps for instruction through whole-group, small-group, or individualized, one-to-one instruction. For example, school leaders state that after teachers examined the results of the Academic Intervention Services and Response to Intervention teams, they determined that students were having trouble writing topic sentences. In response, they adjusted the task by further scaffolding it for students with disabilities and ELLs and by creating differentiated packets in the lower grades.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders engage all staff in weekly and monthly professional learning sessions to communicate expectations of professionalism, instruction, and standards for teaching. In addition, the school partners with families to prepare students for college and career.

### Impact

By consistently communicating elevated expectations to staff and families through clearly defined structures and systems, the school creates a culture that is manifested in increased teacher collaboration and accountability and staff and families work cooperatively to assist students in meeting those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school partners with other organizations to support families so they can in turn support student progress toward expectations. The school helps by communicating each student's reading, writing and math goals and progress towards those goals. For example, the school has a longstanding partnership with the Boys' and Girls' Club of South Queens along with the Richmond Hill Block Association. Both organizations offer either afterschool programs for students and or workshops for families in coordination with the school which provide the necessary supports to help students progress or attain mastery of goals.
- The school ensures timely communication to families through trainings, online supports, parent workshops, newsletters, meetings, and distributes a parent handbook to help support grade level expectations. Progress reports are sent home on an interim basis outside of the normal report card.
- Administration conducts regularly walkthroughs and observations and provided timely feedback to teachers on practices which they need to improve. Teachers receive support on areas needing improvement over a period of time and then are re-visited to monitor if suggestions were implemented. ADVANCE reports indicate that teachers receive both informal and formal feedback to support their growth and learning from school leaders. In addition each grade has a grade leader and both an English language arts and math point person to guide discussions of promising and effective practices.
- Teachers receive information from administration on the expectations for the school year through a staff handbook, frequent email or memo correspondence, and both formal and informal conversations. The principal makes a presentation at the beginning of the year and lays out a plan for professional development on the Common Core instructional shifts, Danielson Framework for Teaching, school's curriculum as well as the school's instructional focus. Administration provides high quality professional development supports for teachers focused on effective questioning, using student assessment data to monitor and revise curriculum, using rubrics with language of the standards to provide feedback and using the differentiated instruction sheet to plan and set goals.

**Findings**

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework. Teaching practices strategically provide multiple entry points, supports, and extensions into the curricula for all learners.

**Impact**

The alignment of pedagogy to the curricula, strategic use of varied teaching strategies to challenge and support all learners, and a focus on helping students master challenging content results in elevated discussions, high quality student work products, and high levels of student participation and ownership.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school's instructional focus is "evidence in argument," and the school's goal is to develop students' skills of citing evidence to support claims. Across the vast majority of classes, the instructional focus was evident in student discussions. For example, in one English language arts class, students participated in a Socratic seminar, and in another they engaged in a close reading of the text followed by small group discussion. In both classes, students cited textual evidence, and teachers made use of text-dependent questions to prompt students to make inferences.
- Across the vast majority of classes visited, the use of teaching strategies such as scaffolding, modeling, building academic vocabulary, and student-to-student discussion strategically provided students multiple pathways and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula. In a science class, for instance, students were highly motivated to design a biosphere using teacher-provided materials, and were constantly challenged not just to explain, but to defend their choice of material to be used, and the sequence of steps required, to their teacher and their peers.
- The school uses ReadyGen, Go Math, and other curriculum resources to provide students to rigorous content in a student centered environment, thereby allowing students choices for accessing content and demonstrating their understanding. Students are grouped into clusters based on the results of assessments, and work on their group projects across all subject areas. Students present their projects at the school's annual fair to an audience of parents, teachers, and other members of the community. This illustrates the school's core beliefs that students learn best in an integrated setting that places a high cognitive demand on all learners while providing the appropriate scaffolds and supports for struggling learners. Teacher pedagogy is informed by the instructional shifts and the Danielson Framework in the vast majority of classrooms, as evidenced by the questioning and assessment strategies used.
- In all classrooms, students were in pre-determined, needs-based groups, with clearly delineated supports for English language learners and special education students. Teachers demonstrated a nuanced understanding of each student's strengths and areas of struggle based on student work products. Planning documents were well-structured with differentiated learning activities for sub-groups and for the lowest and highest performing students. Students were consistently challenged to explain their thinking, challenge one another's thinking, and to formulate higher order questions.

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

Teachers strengthen their instructional capacity by engaging in inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Teacher teams consistently analyze student work and assessment data for students on whom they are focused.

### **Impact**

By examining class and grade-level trends in student work and student performance data, teachers are able to pinpoint specific areas of challenge for groups of students and design interventions to better support these students.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teachers examined the element of rigorous instruction in the Framework for Great Schools and data from their previous Quality Review. They determined that there was a need to refine the use of strategies that provide scaffolds and multiple entry points for ELLs. This needs assessment informed the development of their annual goals in the CEP.
- After examining student work, one teacher team noted that the majority of their students were struggling with writing clear and cogent prose and needed more support in developing an understanding of structure and conventions. Teachers then created graphic organizers, sentence stems, paragraph frames, outlines, and modeled effective writing for their students. Subsequent review of student work showed an improvement in these areas.
- Teachers meet regularly and collaborate on teams to improve student outcomes. A review of meeting minutes revealed that vertical and horizontal alignment was evident as teacher teams regularly met to discuss grade level expectations, identify the lowest and highest third students, and to plan interventions for groups of students based on student work and their reading levels. However, teacher teams could not clearly show how they consistently use protocols (e.g., Tuning, Noticings and Wonderings, Critical Friends, Consultancy) and other structures to strengthen their instructional capacity.