



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Richard Arkwright Elementary School

PS 91

**68-10 Central Avenue
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Victoria Catalano

**Date of review: November 10, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

The School Context

PS 91 is an elementary school with 835 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 52% Hispanic, 41% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.73 %.

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	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	Proficient
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:

Proficient

Findings

High expectations are an integral part of the message that is conveyed through the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and various methods of communication. Newsletters, workshops and parent meetings keep families focused on student achievement towards their next steps for learning.

Impact

Systems and structures that support the high expectations that are articulated by all constituency groups create a sense of accountability among the entire school community nurturing definitive goals towards increased student proficiency levels and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Partnerships formed during college and career day, character assemblies, parent workshops, book club and student buddies reinforce school-wide expectations for culture building and teaching which help to establish social and emotional supports for all students.
- Parent workshops provide information on the importance of helping students at home with academic vocabulary, writing strategies and understanding the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in alignment with reading and math goals.
- The staff is held accountable for meeting expectations through teacher team feedback of tasks, frequent classroom observations and ongoing professional development to improve instructional practices. Teacher practice has improved based on the evidence of use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- Parents shared that teachers and the guidance counselor are very committed to offering consistent support and regularly send documents highlighting their child's progress through emails, monthly progress checks, daily reach outs, report cards and one on one conferences.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While pedagogy is working towards a common philosophy of how students learn best, in alignment with the instructional shifts, supports like questioning, discussion and the use of strategic entry points and extensions varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, there are some missed opportunities for meaningful curricula extensions and supports to produce high level work products for all learners, including the school's sub-groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers discuss some strategies to help different learners. However, in the classes visited, there were uneven levels of scaffolds being presented. Some whole class learning assignments would have been more effective if enrichment extensions were offered to students who were able to move forward after the basic skills were taught.
- Student work products are on display in classrooms and hallways. Students are able to discuss the tasks assigned, but are reticent discussing the importance of the tasks or how it can help them move to the next level of learning.
- Teachers formulate groups of students to initiate discussions that provide for detailed conversations about the lesson. However, some instruction is limited to verbal models of learning and do not offering visual or tactile approaches to learning.
- Some classes have adopted project based learning tasks where students are choosing what they would like to learn and work in teams to accomplish objectives. This, however, is limited to certain classes and is not yet a school initiative.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments, across the grades, in order to track students' progress and check for understanding.

Impact

The school has structures in place to analyze data and monitor progress so that units and lessons can be adjusted to meet students' academic needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Fountas and Pinnell assessment is administered four times a year to determine students' reading levels. Teachers are addressing skill gaps for subgroups of students. When a need surfaced to adjust the English Language Arts curriculum of Ready Gen, the school implemented the Judith C. Hochman writing program so that students can have additional supports adding details to their writing and "stretch out their stories". Results of this adjustment indicate that upper grade students are becoming more proficient in writing concepts like focus, organization, development, language, vocabulary and conventions of a story.
- Across classrooms, performance assessments are aligned to the unit of study and skills taught. Unit assessments are related to the skills addressed and guided reading checklists are in place for teachers to determine progress of reading proficiency. Lower grade teachers posit that reading levels are improving as a result of closely aligned assessments.
- The school analyzes beginning of the year assessment results to determine instructional areas of need and unit and chapter assessment results are used to drive small group instruction. Furthermore, baseline reading results determine guided reading groups. The Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) align math baseline results in grades 3, 4, and 5 and are being used to address the gaps in the current curriculum.
- Ongoing checks and student self-assessment are present in the form of exit slips, student reflections on final writing pieces and quick checks in math to reinforce math facts. Additionally, lower grades are using child friendly writing checklists in writing to determine their levels of success.

Findings

Curricula is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teachers plan and revise units of study so that students are engaged and involved.

Impact

Curricular decisions work to build coherence and promote a plan of “next steps” for students. Across grades and content areas teachers plan to engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are using the suggested common core lesson plans in the ReadyGen’s ELA curriculum as well as performance based writing assessments and “Common Core Critical Areas” to guide the math lessons. The CCLS and instructional shifts are embedded into these practices.
- Lessons are planned using the data that indicate student needs. Higher order thinking skills are evident during “team talk” routines and some students are given various graphic organizers to develop their thinking and structure in writing. Higher order thinking questions (H.O.T) are incorporated into daily mathematical practices. In addition, “Problem Solving for the Common Core” grades 3-5 are using the exemplarslibrary.com site to offer a rigorous experience for students. Students agree that they enjoy trying to find different strategies to solve a mathematical problem.
- In a kindergarten class, students were given an enrichment activity to create an animal chapter book. A checklist was present to determine how students should successfully fulfill the assignment’s requirements. “Our Parents Are Proud” surveys are posted alongside students’ tasks and articulate parents’ thoughts on how their kindergarten student is progressing.

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

Teachers examine student work and data within collaborative teams. Leadership structures are a vehicle towards teacher input and voice on key decisions about curricula and instructional practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has results in improved instructional supports and student progress on unit tasks. Student learning has been positively affected by shared leadership practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams analyze the results of the Item Analysis in ELA and math and unit tasks for sub-groups of students and make instructional changes like adding word prompts and graphic organizers to help students focus on the objective of the lesson. Teachers agree that through student observation and conferences these supports have improved proficiency levels in reading and math tasks.
- Protocols for looking at student work are established at the beginning of teacher team meetings. This practice, in alignment with a review of performance based assessments, has assisted teachers in changing the types of questions they ask students to promote stronger writing skills.
- Through teacher voice, teams were able to decide that the current reading program needed a supportive supplement for writing. A new program was implemented and teachers are finding those students' skills in writing conventions, temporal words and organization of ideas has significantly improved in grades 3-5.