



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

I.S. 093 Ridgewood

Intermediate School Q093

**66-56 Forest Avenue
Ridgewood
NY 11385**

Principal: Edward Santos

**Date of review: April 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rajeev Bector**

The School Context

Intermediate School 093 Ridgewood is an intermediate school with 1197 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 2% Black, 73% Hispanic, 17% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 17% 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 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 | Celebration | Well Developed |
| 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 | Additional Findings | 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 | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core and content standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, emphasize rigorous habits, and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricular coherence is evident across grades and subject areas. As a result, individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest- achieving students, English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to cognitively engaging curricula and tasks and can demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula across grades and subjects emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills, and provide explicit strategies and supports to meet the needs of English language learners, students with disabilities, the school's lowest-third population, and advanced students. For instance, curricula and unit plans in social studies, science, English language arts and math indicate various strategies, appropriate for each content area, for students at different developmental levels: Frayer Model Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) and vocabulary jigsaw strategies for English language learners, choice of research projects for academically advanced learners, the use of manipulatives for tactile learners and diagrams and video clips for visual learners.
- All curricula are aligned to the Common Core standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Academic and domain-specific vocabulary, performance tasks, and scaffolds and extensions for diverse learners are embedded throughout curricula and unit plans; additionally, a variety of instructional materials and resources are used to supplement the text: primary source materials, atlases, educational websites, as well as resources on YouTube. For instance, the curriculum for English language arts incorporates informational text, exposure to different genres, and text-based answers, and the science and social studies curricula emphasize informational essays and argumentative tasks.
- Teachers use student performance data to refine curricula and academic tasks to cognitively engage students, including the lowest and highest achieving students. One of the school's goals in its Comprehensive Educational Plan is to increase by 10% the number of English language learners in stand-alone English as Second Language (ESL) classes who demonstrate growth in science as evidenced by Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) assessment results in Trait 5, citing evidence in support of a claim. The school analyzed the science MoSL data and determined that this was an area of struggle for many English language learners. Consequently, adjustments were made to the academic tasks and teaching strategies to focus on vocabulary development and comprehension, and to include additional scaffolds for English language learners such as graphic organizers, sentence stems, framed paragraphs, direct vocabulary instruction and visual aids.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and assessments aligned with the curricula and use the results of common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers' formative assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, but provide limited feedback to students.

Impact

By monitoring student understanding and analyzing trends for groups of students, teachers are able to make instructional adjustments to meet students' learning needs, and to determine student progress toward goals; however, formative assessment practices do not consistently correlate to clear and meaningful feedback for students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics aligned with the school's curricula to provide actionable feedback to students regarding student achievement. Across disciplines, teachers use a constructed response rubric utilizing the acronym RACE (Restate the prompt, Answer the prompt, Cite textual evidence, Elaborate and explain details) to provide feedback on student work. Students peer-assess using this rubric and identify and categorize each part of the response to show where their peers have restated the prompt, cited textual evidence, and provided relevant details.
- Teachers use interactive features of Smartboards, iPads, and laptops to create assessments, track student progress, and analyze results using Data-Driven Classroom (a web-based assessment system and data platform). Teachers of English track student progress through profile sheets for writing, and mathematics teachers employ a custom built system to monitor progress of students over time.
- The school uses common assessments, and in some disciplines different assessments that measure common skills, to determine student progress toward goals and to adjust curricula and instruction. For instance, teachers analyze simulated English language arts exam results and exit and entrance slip responses to assign students to needs-based groups and to provide differentiated academic tasks based on the students' level. School leadership indicated that in each unit of study students use rubrics to craft a response to the standards-based writing task, and teachers examine the results and use profile sheets (a system of organizing students' written responses) to understand the extent of student learning. They then create scaffolds, such as graphic organizers, to better support struggling learners.
- While teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, across classrooms teachers provided limited feedback to students on their academic performance. In some classes teachers used effective formative assessment strategies and rubrics to gauge the extent of student learning, but in others teachers assessed understanding of the content for the class as a whole, circulated but did not provide substantive feedback, and did not make the assessment criteria clear to students.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and reflects a coherent set of beliefs about student learning that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula, and the use of scaffolding and effective questioning strategies, enables all learners to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. In 6 of 7 classrooms, students built domain-specific knowledge through text and used academic vocabulary across disciplines. For instance, in a grade 7 English language arts class students read the grade-appropriate text and distinguished between central and minor conflicts, as well as internal and external conflict. In a grade 8 algebra class, students used polynomial expressions to represent dimensions; they practiced factoring polynomials and simultaneously deepened their understanding of the concept of modeling area.
- Teaching strategies, such as questioning, scaffolds, and supports, provide multiple entry points into the curricula. In a math lesson, students received different worksheets and graphic organizers in different groups, while in a social studies class students received three versions of a primary source document: one without any scaffolds; one with bolded vocabulary and definitions for students who struggle with analyzing textual evidence and academic vocabulary; and one with pictorial support for students who struggle with understanding key concepts.
- Across classrooms, students justified their responses by citing textual evidence, crafted their own questions, and respectfully challenged one another's views, keeping the focus on evidence-based argumentation. Teachers made connections to the real world by explicitly connecting concepts to everyday experiences and encouraging inquiry.
- Although students were encouraged to collaborate with one another, student participation in small groups and student-to-student discussion in large group settings was limited. Additionally, academic tasks did not afford opportunities for student choice, and extensions for higher performing students were not always in place. In two classrooms, students did not build on one another's responses, and in another they were focused on task completion rather than building a genuine understanding of the content.

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for professionalism and instruction to the entire staff and provide training. School leaders and staff offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

By consistently communicating high expectations to staff and families, and creating a system of accountability for those expectations for staff, the school has created a culture for learning that supports the academic growth of all students. Additionally, the school helps families understand student progress toward the school's high expectations for student success.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward expectations connected to college and career readiness. The school communicates with families in several ways: guidance counselors conduct workshops such as, "Helping Your Child Succeed in School" and "Transitioning to High School" ; school leadership helps families understand the City and State accountability system and metrics; and the parent coordinator organizes workshops on topics such as parenting skills, technology training, curriculum conference, and family day events. On the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, 94% of families report that the school has "high expectations for my child," and 90% indicate that the school keeps them informed about "what my child is learning."
- The school's Comprehensive Educational Plan indicates that professional learning is organized around three primary areas: Domain 3 of the Danielson Framework, special education knowledge and skill level, and proficiency level in Skedula (a school-wide data and communication system for creating assignments, grading, and taking attendance.) The school also provides new teacher mentoring, coaching in literacy, and support for assessment analysis in teacher teams. School leaders indicate that they use data from Advance, the Teacher Evaluation and Development System, to plan professional development activities and conduct a survey to gauge teacher interest. However, professional learning opportunities are not always tailored to teachers' individual needs: on the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, 61% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "I am receiving professional development that is more tailored to my development needs."
- Families indicate that they use PupilPath, an online portal for communicating with the school, on an ongoing basis to stay informed of their child's progress, and that the school personalizes the learning environment for students by treating students as individuals and understanding their unique strengths and challenges. Families participate in meetings with teachers to understand the academic requirements for each grade and actively seek help with the high school application. One parent stated, "Each teacher shows me where my child is lacking and sits down with me to explain how to do an assignment. Teachers put in the time to help the students and the parents."

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| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

Teachers systematically analyze teacher work, assessment data, and student work. There is effective teacher leadership, and teachers play an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

The deliberate and structured work of teacher teams has a direct impact on student learning by strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. Well-defined team structures enable teachers to play an integral role in key decisions that result in mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- During their teacher team meeting, teachers used a “Learning from Student Work” protocol to examine student work from a recent assessment and identify trends and patterns. For instance, the English language arts team discovered that students were struggling with developing a literary voice, and with identifying and using certain literary elements such as theme. As a result, they decided to make greater use of modeling strategies and refine the curriculum to deepen the focus on using voice and literary elements. They also changed the rubric to ensure they were assessing these skills in student work.
- Teacher teams organize inter-visitations, with support from school leadership, and examine classroom practice with specific lenses: student engagement, student work products, questioning, scaffolding, and assessment. Data from the most recent inter-visitation log indicates that 32 of the 85 teachers participated and wrote reflections on their experiences, thus deepening their understanding of pedagogical strategies to be used to engage all learners. Teachers also collaborate with the two lead teachers in the building to deepen and cross-pollinate effective practices.
- One of the school’s goals in its Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) states, “By June 2015, there will be a 5% increase in the number of 8th graders currently in the lowest third meeting or exceeding New York State Standards, specifically in the areas of expressions/equations and geometry as measured by our own Common Core aligned periodic assessments.” Teacher teams met to design, adjust, and implement instructional tasks and activities to further this goal through questioning strategies utilizing the Depth of Knowledge wheel as a guide, strategic grouping (based on common misunderstandings as well as interest and choice), and through the use of various protocols. Consequently, twenty of the twenty-four students who constituted the lowest third population in 8th grade geometry have made sufficient progress so that they are no longer a part of this population.
- There is effective teacher leadership and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. For instance, school leadership collaborated with teachers to formulate their annual goals in the CEP. Specifically for one goal, teachers indicated that they could achieve a 10% increase for English language learners in Trait 5, citing evidence in support of a claim, in science. Consequently, based on teacher input, this goal was memorialized, and teachers were empowered to use available resources in furtherance of this goal.