



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Douglaston School

Elementary School Q098

**40-20 235th Street
Queens
NY 11363**

Principal: Sheila Huggins

**Date of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

The School Context

The Douglaston School is an elementary school with 221 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 15% Hispanic, 45% White, 28% Asian students, 4% Multi-racial, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native and 1% Native Hawaiian/other Pacific Islander. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.5%.

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	Well Developed
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

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness, and successfully partner with families to support student progress. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students and provides clear, focused and effective feedback and guidance supports to ensure that students own their educational experience.

Impact

The school's communication has improved the awareness of families and students of the high expectations for student progress. The quality of student work and performance on state exams is improving and students are able to work to their highest level of performance.

Supporting Evidence

- The school provides a handbook and frequent grade specific newsletters to the parents. They include information about the standards as well as ways parents can support their children at home. The school uses comprehensive tools to communicate with parents with input from all constituents, including teachers and parents. The school also has a parent liaison who helps get students acclimated and adjusted to the school community.
- Frequent parent workshops on topics such as the Common Core Learning Standards, homework help, study skills, state assessments, Escape schools, as well as on bully prevention support the parents to help them ensure their children's mastery of the Common Core Learning Standards. The workshops also address the social and emotional needs of students. Parents have a voice in the selection of topics and they help to facilitate sessions.
- All members of the school community expose students to developing habits of mind that promote student success, such as teamwork, perseverance, and self-discipline. In addition, personal habits of self-regulation are messaged to all students at regularly scheduled assembly programs.
- Feedback to students is provided informally through regular feedback sessions. In addition, student friendly rubrics have been developed in all subjects, clearly establishing the criteria for exemplary, high-quality standards of work and performance. Students are aware of their strengths and next steps for growth, and are actively involved in reflection and self-assessment of their work.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teachers 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. In addition, students receive actionable feedback and teachers consistently check for understanding.

Impact

Assessment practices enable teachers to strategically group students based on periodic formative assessment data and provide them with enrichment or intervention supports, as needed. Although the school has information about student achievement and progress towards goals for students, the school is in the process of working towards systems and structures that would use these results to create a clear portrait of student achievement across all grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administrators articulate consistent reasons for assessment choices such as Teachers College Reading Writing Project Assessments, performance tasks, pre and post unit assessments and running records to determine student growth and progress as it relates to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and to make the needed adjustments to improve instruction.
- Across classrooms visited, teachers monitor student understanding during lessons and actively try to determine what students know and understand during the point of instruction, often pulling a small group for further support, enrichment or intervention. Using rubrics, checklists, and conferencing, students are able to receive feedback from both teachers and peers, however, the school is working towards the vast majority of classrooms utilizing this practice.
- Students in some upper grade classes consistently self- or peer-assessed based on the assessment criteria by utilizing writing, reading, or math checklists. This practice helped students to monitor their own understanding and progress on the tasks created by the teacher and know their next learning steps. The school is in the process of creating similar modified rubrics and checklists for student use in the lower grades.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula align to Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills for all learners across most grades and content areas.

Impact

Teachers and teams ensure the integration of instructional shifts throughout curriculum maps, units of study and lesson plans, addressing priority standards in core subject areas integrated with science and social studies. In addition, lessons incorporate rigorous and challenging academic tasks where students have opportunities to demonstrate their thinking and understanding.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams revised the curriculum using Ready Gen for reading, adding texts that are more complicated later in the year and increasing reading proficiency levels across grades. In addition, the reflection and unit planning maps for GoMath! provide a breakdown of the content, skills, vocabulary, assessments, resources, and differentiated learning activities for students identified as low, middle, and high achievers, as well as supports for English language learners.
- Curriculum tasks and lesson plans include text dependent questions and students must cite their evidence to prove their thinking and support their answers. However, in a few classes, the lesson plans did not demonstrate a clear plan to support various learners, including students performing at or above grade level.
- Lessons include teacher created materials and other resources to provide support to students in learning the content as well as skills and strategies that encourage higher order thinking such as synthesizing two texts, comparing and contrasting texts, and making inferences.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has developed teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Curricular aligned teaching practices are engaging and meet the needs of all learners. Across the vast majority of classrooms, there are scaffolds to support varied learners, tiered questioning and opportunities for student choice.

Impact

Teaching practices are purposefully planned and implemented and allow opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning, positively affecting the level of their work products so that all students can show progress toward mastery of learning targets and standards.

Supporting Evidence

- In all classrooms visited, teacher practices consistently reflect and support school-wide beliefs about how students learn best. In interviews, teachers and administrators consistently shared that they believe in the workshop model, small group instruction, multiple entry points for students, integrated use of technology, and clear expectations for student learning. In all classrooms visited, students were working in small groups focused on activities based on their strengths or area of growth, which demonstrated all articulated beliefs. For example, in a grade 3 math class, students had to use previously learned material, and then explain and apply strategies to solve multi-step word problems. Students used a problem-solving chart on the board to help guide their work in groups.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms, it was evident that instructional strategies, learning activities and outcomes derive from standards-based curricula and reflect school leadership's espoused beliefs about the best learning conditions, influenced by prioritizing the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. For example, in one grade 4 class, the teacher asked students to create a project proposal for their idea to become financially successful using a central text they previously read.
- Student groups are thoughtfully organized and varied. They build on student strengths and incorporate student choice to maximize learning. Well-structured plans for lessons and units utilize suitable pacing and time allocations. For example, the teacher asked students in a grade 1 English language arts class to create a double bubble-thinking map to compare and contrast the contributions of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Students were grouped based on teacher observations of their work and conference notes with students. Students were then able to choose the type of enrichment or extended practice activity they wanted to participate in with their learning partner after speaking to the teacher. Teachers supported students by working with small groups and circulated throughout the classroom to ensure students understood tasks and activities.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional team collaborations using an inquiry approach that promote shared leadership and focus on improved student learning. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions.

Impact

The collaborative inquiry work is improving teaching practice and the progress of small groups of students is evident. Teachers contribute their ideas and make decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers were empowered to make the decision to continue to utilize the Teachers College Program as the main literacy program, with the support of materials from ReadyGen, as needed. Administration supported teachers in making this key decision that affected student learning across the school.
- Teachers use common planning periods to meet and plan vertically and horizontally to examine student work samples to identify weak areas of learning and create plans for next steps in teaching and learning. These sessions include cluster teachers, the English as a Second Language teacher and other teachers, as needed, to make decisions affecting individual and groups of students. Teachers are also beginning to think about and work on creating more coherence across all grades.
- The grade 5 team used an analysis of student work protocol to look at student work from a grade 5 writing sample where students had to write an argumentative essay based on a fictional story they read entitled *George's Secret Key to the Universe*. Teachers highlighted glows and goals for the sample student work and shared their findings across the grade and various classes. Teachers examined current student writing samples, observed trends, and then discussed implications for classroom practice. Teams also compared previous student writing samples from an earlier prompt in order to analyze what teaching strategies worked well and noted areas still in need of refinement. However, more work needs to be done to expand this work to other grades across the school.