



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

PS/IS 102

Elementary-Middle School Q102

**54-24 Van Horn Street
Queens
NY 11373**

Principal: Anthony Pisacano

**Date of review: April 1, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

The School Context

PS/IS 102 is an elementary/middle school with 1,239 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 35% Hispanic, 2% White, and 60% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.60%.

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	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	Celebration	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	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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Instructional practices in a plethora of classrooms shows curriculum coherence, purposeful teaching strategies that provide students access into the curricula and work products that demonstrate deep levels of student thinking and engagement.

Impact

Classrooms across the grades and content areas provide instructional practices that implement a cadre of learning supports that consistently engage students in higher order thinking activities and tasks resulting in student work that exceeds the standards and employs student ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout the school there is an “aura of excellence” that promotes the philosophy that students are responsible for their learning and partners with teachers to explore activities through high levels of questions and discussions. The Danielson Framework for Teaching drives the practices like analyzing, applying and synthesizing information from multiple sources that are implemented by teachers. For example, in a self-contained kindergarten/first grade classroom, students work independently on mathematics examples using an artifact that gives them a list of eight ways to independently solve a problem. In an English Language learner class students are able to refer to thinking maps in order to organize their thoughts and see analogies in task topics. As a result, first grade English language learners have increased their reading proficiency levels by more than 15% since the beginning of the year.
- Classrooms, student work folders, bulletin boards and notebooks provide examples of activities that are metacognitive and develop higher order thinking skills. In a second grade classroom students were determining the central message of a story by analyzing the major events and characters’ feelings within the text. Students were able to share out their findings and then peer and self-assess their responses. Through a *Team Talk* protocol, students used strategies like using a thinking map to understand characters’ actions, compare pictures to the printed work and share points of view with a partner to determine authenticity of responses. As a result of this practice, students were cognitively engaged in the activity and able to synthesize the information to later write about their experiences and noticing’s.
- High level accountable talk is a common practice in classrooms throughout the school. In a fourth grade class there were stations of students working on the task of interpreting visual information and sharing information with peers. Think-pair-share, word work, i-Ready on-line assessment, a read aloud center and small group work with the teacher were all going on simultaneously. Students are accountable for their learning and were working on reflections about how their thinking has changed and what evidence will support their opinion. One student said, “ I am stronger at finding contextual clues because I-Ready helps me understand harder vocabulary words. As a result of these practices, 45% of these fourth grade students’ reading levels have improved since September.

Area of Focus

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

School leaders ensure that teachers across grade levels and content areas engage in structured professional learning communities. Teams of teachers analyze student data and share reflections on improved teacher practices.

Impact

The use of an inquiry approach is in place across content area and grade level teams. Groups of students have made progress in the goals that were set for them. Future goals for the team involve researching a teaching strategy for improved instructional effectiveness.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level team meetings take place once a week and then informally throughout the month using an inquiry approach aligned to school goals and the CCLS. The grade 2 team has been working on modifying the writing curriculum so that students will be better able to create a voice, add greater details and clarify their organization in writing different genres. The team shared that the results of their work has led to improvement in writing proficiency across the grade in addition to students able to elaborate on their thoughts in a more coherent manner.
- Improved teacher practice is a focus of the vertical team. The purpose of this team is to look at student writing using a protocol, diagnose strengths and weaknesses of a sampling of the bottom one-third of each class, set a goal and identify instructional next steps by creating actionable plans together. Specific goals for this team ranged from helping students choose the proper thinking map to help them organize their ideas to provide strategies for students to cite specific evidence when defending a claim. The team agreed that sharing practices helped them be able to look at student work with a new, critical lens.
- Teacher teams are refining a process by which they collaboratively analyze student outcomes to inform instructional next steps. This was evidenced in an observation of a science class in which the teacher shared the practice of annotating text to find evidence that supported the writing task and claim. The teacher posited that since this strategy was applied, 75% of English language learners in the class have improved in the written portion of their labs.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and content standards so that there is a seamless transition to the instructional shifts and curricula ensures rigor. Academic practices and tasks embed critical thinking across grades and subjects for all learners.

Impact

Higher order thinking skills and college and career readiness are two focal points in the development of common core aligned curricula units of student across content areas. There is a strong integration of the Arts and technology within rigorous academic tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal states that “literacy is the foundation for success across all content areas”. Instructional coaches have worked with teacher teams to modify literacy and math curriculum based on the growing needs of the student population. For example, rubrics for a variety of writing genres were modified so that students would be able to increase the number of reasons in their writing to defend an opinion or elaborate on important facts. Students with disabilities in upper grades improved their proficiency levels by 25% after these modifications were applied. Additionally, in analyzing math work, teams worked on unpacking the task and making it clearer for students to understand. As a result, students in grades 1-3 had a higher percentage of questions correct on base line assessments.
- There is a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum that is aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the Citywide Instructional Expectations. Collaboration and idea building in addition to transference of skills that builds on what has been taught across heterogeneously grouped K-8 prepares students for college and career readiness. For example, the 8th grade math curriculum has been adjusted to add extensions for students who are exceeding the standards. Once students completed their investigation of parallel lines and similar triangles they had an opportunity to create their own indirect measurement by using their height and shadow. Students agreed that creative projects help them “solidify the objective” and make learning more interesting.
- Learning programs are accessible for all learners by classroom teachers and instructional coaches through the development of addendums to the ReadyGen literacy program that provide scaffolds for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) as well as extensions to the curriculum for advanced learners. For example, by offering a variety of thinking maps to students they are able to tackle tasks using a formatted approach. The scaffolds have been successful as evidenced by an increase in independent reading levels. Kindergarten reading levels have improved by 5% showing progress for all learners and first grade levels have improved for English language learners by 13% from September through February.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders implement a wide range of strategies to develop and promote high expectations across the entire school community. The staff diligently works with families to ensure consistent levels of student progress and effectively communicates the instructional foci, content knowledge and skills sets students are expected to attain.

Impact

Verbal and written school-wide systems support high expectations that are communicated often, developing a culture where all members feel responsible for school goals. Families actively support their children in achieving success and are proactively reinforcing the school's high expectations, deepening their understanding of college and career readiness skills.

Supporting Evidence

- There is a clear theory of action about how expectations are connected to college and career readiness. The rationale around the supports is that students have to learn to help themselves and given the proper tools this can be achieved. Students can fluidly discuss the supports offered by the school and how these supports have helped them progress. One student was asked about her mathematics intervention plan and she said, "I-Ready is a virtual on-line game for kids who can think out of the box. I have learned to use strategies like compatible thinking number graphs with plots. Now I look for stronger associations and visuals when I answer the tasks".
- Parents shared that the administration's open door policy, teachers' accessibility and feedback and information sessions on the Common Core Learning Standards help them support their children at home with learning tasks and long term projects. For example, A group of parents met for a workshop on *Conceptual Maps*. The facilitator provided parents with a list of the skills students were expected to know and strategies that could help students' meet the goals by the end of the unit.
- High expectations are communicated on a daily basis and are aligned to the foundations of professional development through the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Staff members are able to choose their timeline of development and select to improve practices according to the data that is connected to their students' progress. This year professional development has focused on effective questioning and feedback, student autonomy through the Socratic Method and modifying curriculum to meet students' needs. Feedback to teachers has improved practice resulting in a greater percentage of teachers highly effective in specific domains.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses performance-based rubrics, grading policies and common assessments that are aligned to key standards to attain a transparent understanding of student achievement toward goals.

Impact

Effective instructional and curricular modifications and timely feedback with measurable components help students move toward their goal projections.

Supporting Evidence

- Students are very familiar with rubrics and thinking maps and are able to share their work products and teacher feedback. One student explained that he was required to include text based evidence and his “thinking trajectory” in order to clearly explain his work. Students as young as first grade were able to compare their writing throughout the year and explain how the rubric and the teacher’s feedback is the catalyst for their next steps. Students explained that they are organizing their thoughts through thinking maps and adding more details to their writing. As a result of these practices, students in grades 6-8 have increased their proficiency levels in organization, main idea and including details by 35%.
- Parents state that this is a “school of excellence” because they are well informed about all aspects of the school and are “partners in their child’s education”. Feedback that is offered to parents refers to “next level thinking” and the school is able to prepare parents for their child’s next steps through demonstration lessons, school walk thoughts and sharing samplings of student work. One parent said that she always knows how her son is doing because “progress is part of the conversation at PS/IS 102”.
- Results from assessments are used to plan lessons and group students. Across content areas teachers use student and teacher checklists to assess student work and make adjustments throughout the lessons. Modifications that were present were use of graphic organizers and thinking maps, flexible grouping and small groups aligned to a specific skill. In one upper grade classroom, students were using a *Multiple-Choice Question Learning Plan* to schedule the standard they were working on for the day. A cluster of students were working in the learning station aligned to the standard for analyzing the impact of specific words/phrases and how they affect the meaning/tone of the text. Students agreed that by selecting their standard of concentration it helps them advance towards their goals.