



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Captain Vincent G. Fowler School

Elementary School Q108

**108-10 109 Avenue
Queens
NY 11420**

Principal: Marie Biondollilo

**Date of review: February 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

The School Context

The Captain Vincent G. Fowler School is an elementary school with 1,464 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 8% Black, 28% Hispanic, 5% White, and 59% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.3%.

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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff about professionalism, instruction, and communication and provide training resulting in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations. In addition, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families.

Impact

As a result, teachers receive high quality, structured, on-going training and professional development and are held accountable for expectations. In addition, families have taken on an active role in the school community to create successful partnerships throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are given surveys at the beginning of the year and have a menu of topics and options to select and participate in professional learning activities which best suit their needs, facilitated by administration, network personnel, consultants, and/or teachers themselves.
- Administration meets with teachers to review elements of the Danielson Framework for Effective Teaching and have frequent cycles of observations with feedback for next steps as evidenced by the professional development plan for the school, walkthrough feedback and identifiable next steps to improve teaching and learning.
- School leaders and staff effectively communicate high expectations that support the successful partnering with families to further student progress towards college and career readiness. Parents are able to work with teachers and collaborate with them to help improve their child's progress. For example, the school shares periodic updates about student reading levels, student work samples, and assessments. Parents are held accountable by the school for helping students achieve learning targets and next steps in learning.
- The school, in collaboration with input from parents provides a variety of workshops and meetings for parents across all grades. For example, there are online support tools like MyOn for parents with strategies to help students and parents with information related to the Common Core Learning Standards. Parents participate in ongoing and frequent communication with the school to establish partnerships for the school based on need and take ownership for projects to engage parents and students to develop a sense of community.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

As a result, teachers work with students in small groups based on their needs through explicit modeling for students of the expectations for the lesson. Across classrooms, student discussions in groups or pairs helped students to make meaning of what was required of them during each lesson.

Supporting Evidence

- There are structures and routines which include collaborative protocols for students to have conversations and discussions in small groups based on questions posed by the teacher. In some classes, groups were assigned students who facilitated team conversations. While teachers asked a combination of low and high level questions based on the Depth of Knowledge and students had to explain their thinking, there were limited opportunities for students to create or pose their own questions and take full ownership of their learning. For example, students in a fourth grade class were answering text dependent questions to be able to monitor their own comprehension of the reading. Questions posed by the teacher were, “What does bigotry mean?”, “How did Martin’s mother respond when Martin Luther asked why white people treated colored people badly?”
- Across classrooms, most students were engaged in some level of conversations and discussions reflecting the use of accountable talk stems and prompts where they were agreeing and disagreeing with claims presented by classmates. However, in a few classrooms, the discussion was generally between teacher and select students. Students were asked to explain how the character’s action in the book *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young, which is story based on China’s version of the story *Red Riding Hood*, contribute to the sequence of events in the story. Students were required to cite text evidence to support answers while answering various higher level thinking questions. For example, level 1 questions were about details, level 2 questions were about character personalities, and level 4 questions dealt with interpreting slang used in the story.
- Most teachers identify and generate prioritized learning objectives and teach lessons to support those objectives for students to work in small groups based on skill, strength or goals. For example, in a second grade reading classroom, students were asked to use text based evidence to answer text dependent questions from the story *Super Crocodile*. Students read independently at first and then worked to answer the questions in a group. However, students who understood the text were not allowed to veer away and formulate their own questions which were not literal based.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. In addition, rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks, and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

As a result of school-wide coherence in curricula development and revision, curricula across grades and content areas ensure that all learners must demonstrate their thinking and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Habits of mind are evident across curriculum maps and units of study and can be seen embedded in tasks, such as word problems requiring students to persist, and in questioning where students have to apply past working knowledge to new situations in order to solve problems and think interdependently to complete classroom activities. For example, when the third grade team created a unit on *Peter Pan*, the prompts and activities were tweaked for strategic tiered activities so all students had access to materials and include activities for English language learners (ELLs) to grapple with terminology and phrases used in the text which would hinder their comprehension. Each week revisions and tweaks were made to the curriculum to meet the needs of the students based on work products. The school's curricula also exchange ELLs and students with disabilities (SWDs) between classes to allow for activities more suited for their learning style and level.
- Rigorous habits and higher order skills, such as those that require students to create their own meaning, integrate skills into processes, and use what they have learned to solve real world problems, are identified and embedded coherently across grades and subjects. For example, tasks were developed to have students complete graphic organizers about the South American economy with subtopics related to increasingly complex and various articles and text related to the subject.
- School leaders and teachers can articulate how curricula, across and within grade levels, are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and scaffold student success to promote college and career readiness for all students in grades kindergarten to 5. For example, the curricula were revised to incorporate a significant increase in the amount of opportunities students had to engage in student-to-student discussion and afterwards required to complete a writing response related to literature previously read. This is evident in unit plans and curricula maps.
- The school has clearly defined criteria for what it means to exit a grade level and to attain the enduring understandings and key skills that ensure success in college and career. The school's curricula, which includes has been strategically and purposefully utilized, updated, revised and supplemented for all grades. In addition, upon review of unit plans and maps and after analyzing gaps for English language arts (ELA) and math, the school redesigned maps based on student work to support instruction in core areas.

Findings

The school consistently uses and adjusts curricula aligned assessment practices, grading policies and pedagogical strategies that focus on checks for understanding to create a clear portrait for students and staff regarding student achievement or progress.

Impact

Data driven decisions are made school wide leading to adjustments in pedagogical practices based on teacher team and classroom levels, and student assessment tools guide instructional decisions and prove clear and actionable learning targets for all learners. Student learning needs are met as teachers help them before, during and after each lesson.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus, as articulated by all teachers and administrators, centers on deepening the knowledge of students by consistently analyze and use student data to drive instruction. Teachers identify trends in data and adjusting Curriculum Maps & Teaching methods, in order to ensure all students' individual needs are met and students are progressing academically. This work has led to increased focus on the design of tasks and teaching strategies, such as academic vocabulary and close reading strategies to include multiple entry points with a focus on students with disabilities who are struggling with particular standards.
- On a weekly basis, vertical and horizontal teacher teams plan rigorous tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that support critical thinking and student next steps. For example, reading data tells a story and helps teachers and administrators design concrete next steps for students based on the five pillars of reading instruction which include comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics or phonemic awareness. For example, in Kindergarten the baseline assessment is administered, Fountas and Pinnel, and Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) determine student's strengths and weaknesses. The school tweaked assessments when they noticed students reading on level Z and not earning level 4 on state exams. The collecting, organizing, and analyzing of reading data helps to give the school a clear picture of student reading level by individual student, class, grade, and by area.
- The principal works closely with the school assessment team to track a variety of data, including but not limited, literacy tracking sheets created by Generation Ready, pre and post assessments in math and ELA; Fountas and Pinnel benchmarks; mid-unit reviews, in class post-it notes, teacher feedback and student self-assessment rubrics, and checklists. This disaggregated data is used by teacher teams to track student understanding of standards and to make adjustments to curriculum.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms there is evidence that teachers are monitoring progress of students within each unit of study through frequent strategies such as use of checklists, questioning, exit slips and conferencing in order to effectively group students. Students are aware of the purposeful groups and are able to articulate their understanding of the flexible groupings and the range of work that needs to be done with their peers. Students shared that their grouping is dependent on their individual responses to daily exit tickets. Teachers work with students in small groups or assign partner or group work depending on their demonstration of understanding of the subject material.

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

Teachers consistently engage in structured professional collaborations in teams using an inquiry approach that has resulted in shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning outcomes. Teacher capacity has been strengthened as a result of the work and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Impact

School wide assessment practices are aligned to the curricula modified as needed and has resulted in significant student improvement on benchmark and formative assessments administered across subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams effectively implement systems to monitor a variety of student data and classroom practices that inform instruction leading to the achievement of goals for individual, as well as, groups of students. For example, during the 3rd grade team meeting, teachers were engaged in reviewing student work based on the analysis of writing trends by teachers using different types of methods for student writing in notebooks and on their Animal inspired essays. Teachers also used previous data to discuss adjustment of classroom strategies and the improvement or regression of writing based on changes to instructional practices.
- Teacher teams provide a data-based rationale and analysis of student work that inform their decisions to adjust teacher practice and create strategic activities for individual and groups of students. Teams meet both horizontally and vertically to monitor student progress in relation to the standards based on both formative and summative assessment sources and collaborate with administration to adjust scheduling to support this work.
- The schools, including administration and teachers have built a culture of professional collaboration in which they share insights, best practices about how students learn best fostering improvement and progress for all learners. For example, the third grade team uses student essays to determine the most effective teaching practices to improve student writing. At first the team looked at mechanics and conventions and has shifted to help students craft essays based on more solid content. The team utilizes a protocol for looking at student work to share patterns and trends noticed on student writing samples, reflect on questions generated and then design next steps collaboratively. Subsequently, the third grade team then invites the 2nd grade and 4th grade teams, respectively, to their meetings to discuss gaps and noticings and make adjustments to teacher practices and related curricula to address concerns and issues.
- The vast majority of teachers collaborate in professional teams where they develop and implement school wide instructional practices, embedding the Common Core State Standards and instructional shifts to continuously promote improved achievement for all learners. Teachers meet twice per week, or as often as necessary to determine areas of their own expertise so they may provide staff with professional learning in a particular area of strength or need. Teachers shared the cycle of professional learning on selected afternoons.