

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Roy Wilkins School

Elementary School Q136

**201-15 115th Avenue
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Tanya Walker

**Date of review: May 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Mitchell**

The School Context

PS 136 is an elementary school with 591 students from grade kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 91% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.8%.

School Quality Criteria

| Instructional Core | | |
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| <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 | 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 | Celebration | Proficient |

Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers consistently engage in inquiry-based professional collaboration on teams. These teams work on all major aspects of teaching including classroom practice, assessments and student work products.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in expanded instructional capacity and a more thorough implementation of CCLS leading to increased student achievement. The improvements in teacher practice have enhanced student progress towards individual and group goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet formally twice a week and informally up to five times a week on their common prep and lunch periods. The teacher leaders have integrated English Language Learners and Special Education teachers into their ranks and have content area specialists on each team. For example, the first grade team has a strong English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies person. On the early grades a teacher maybe strong in more than one subject.
- Teacher leaders, who represent each grade or subject area, meet regularly with the instructional cabinet to discuss professional development and teacher priorities. This process addresses teacher concerns outside of an adversarial context. The professional development on Mondays has emerged from these collaborations to strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers.
- Teacher teams review the results of all benchmark assessments, unit assessments, written assignments and performance tasks to discover trends and areas of need. They use this data to adjust teaching practice and refine instructional strategies. For example, the mixed teacher team explained that they are training students for deep discussions by coaching them in the facilitator role.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While the school uses common assessments in all subject areas, tracks student progress, and consistently checks for understanding, the use of student self-assessment varies across the school.

Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through data analysis and during instruction are used regularly to guide adjustments in lessons to meet students' learning needs, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning with student self-assessment.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses common assessments in all subject areas which provide information on student performance and progress. For example, Ready Gen and Envisions have CCLS aligned unit assessments that enable teachers to examine students' strengths and needs.
- Teachers collaborate to create and modify curriculum-aligned rubrics, quizzes and checklists. Teachers monitor student progress in morning clubs, after-school programs and academic intervention during the school day. Teachers' conference notes indicate that formative assessments lead to instructional adjustments such as re-teaching concepts and re-arranging flexible groups.
- Across classrooms teachers use multiple methods to check for understanding. The methodology includes but is not limited to mid-workshop interruptions, exit slips with reflections, peer feedback checklists, task-specific rubrics and essential questions. Some of the specific adjustments that were observed in response to information on student understanding included the use of leveled texts, a variety of graphic organizers, KWL charts, sequence organizers, and the use of technological aids. Students complete self-assessment checklists on certain written assignments, yet teachers sporadically use this information to provide tailored feedback to students. Learners, as a result, are sometimes unable to take responsibility for their next steps.
- Teachers effectively dissect the standards and analyze the instructional shifts for the essential topics that contain concepts and skills that students need to know and are able to do. The reliability of school level assessments is maintained through the consistent collaborative structures for norming and precise interpretation of evidence used to evaluate student performance.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

The curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Higher-order and critical thinking skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades.

Impact

The school's curricula decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners including English language learners and Special education students. Academic tasks push student thinking across grades and subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Reading, writing and math unit of study are modified by teacher teams to integrate the CCLS instructional shifts across content areas. For example, thoughtfully considered strategies include strong academic vocabulary, fluency in literacy and numeracy, multi-step math problem solving, argumentative writing using claims and counter-claims and responses grounded in texts.
- Curriculum maps for both science and social studies provide evidence that the school develops rigorous academic tasks through the adaptation of resources available from Engage NY, the Department of Education's Common Core Library and the New York City social studies and science scope and sequence.
- Lesson plans were available for all the visited classrooms. They included the lesson objective, the standard addressed, essential questions, a Read Aloud on the primary grades, benchmark vocabulary, team talk, discussion questions and small group instruction. Several plans include assessments and some include a summary at the end of the period. Students are sometimes provided with choice of performance tasks, particularly in English language arts and math.
- Unit plans contained detailed suggestions for supportive scaffolds and multiple entry points for students including ELLs and SWDs. For example, science lessons include hands-on equipment, math lessons contain manipulative items like scales, cubes and counters; social studies lessons contain DBQs and video clips and English language arts use discussion prompts and cause and effect cues.

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

Pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports, including questioning and discussion, while student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation including ELLs and SWDs.

Impact

Across classrooms teaching strategies and curricula extensions support students to produce meaningful work products. All learners, including English language learners and Special education students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- During an English language arts lesson in a fifth grade class, students studied a historical text on Henry Hudson searching for textual evidence to support the author's view point. Rich student discussion was generated based on the facts the author gave, the quotations that supported the reasoning and the details that buttressed the conclusions. Students made mini-presentations and question each other at the higher levels of Hess's matrix.
- A review of student portfolios revealed consistent evidence of argumentative writing, writing to explain and writing to inform. The student work products reflected higher levels of student thinking even though feedback from teachers was quite limited. Students expressed great familiarity with the performance level of their work and their next steps.
- The English as a second language and resource room teacher push-in to the classrooms at various times during the day. They do this to support English language learners, special education students, and struggling readers. The instruction of these additional teachers makes individual attention possible and supports the school's vision of strong academic vocabulary and effective writing.
- In a first grade ELA class, students were working in groups on understanding the framework and story elements of a fairytale. One person was the recorder and wrote down ideas generated in the group. These ideas included developing characters, a setting, a problem and a solution. They began their story with "once upon a time" and ended with "they lived happily ever after". The teacher provided student groups with a checklist to keep them on task and provide quality guidance. Examples of items included basic grammatical format rules and the parameters of the task.

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

School leaders convey high expectations consistently to staff through the use of Danielson Framework for Teaching in trainings and multiple modes of communication. Regular performance updates and parental workshops keep families abreast of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations build collaboration and accountability among staff, students and their families. This explicitly provides a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders engage in frequent formal and informal observations and provide individualized feedback to teachers using the Danielson Framework. Peer inter-visitations, peer coaching, regular relevant professional development and informal conversations among the faculty hold staff accountable for meeting expectations.
- Monthly parent newsletters, parent workshops on the Common Core and methods of helping with homework as well as parent links to the school's educational technology promote clear communication to families on the school's expectations and a path to college and career readiness. The school provides parents with access to their website and e-mail is a major method for sharing information.
- Parents expressed support for the school's emphasis on post-secondary preparation and college and career readiness. The school community holds regular assemblies on behavioral expectations and social-emotional supports. Parents stated that teachers offer informal guidance to children in need and regularly update parents via monthly reports, report cards, notes home and phone outreach. Parents, who request to meet with the school, receive regular appointments on Tuesday afternoons.