



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Colonel Jeromus Remsen

**Elementary School Q144
93-02 69th Avenue
Queens
NY 11375**

Principal: Reva Gluck-Schneider

**Date of review: November 17, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

The School Context

Colonel Jeromus Remsen is an elementary school with 819 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 14% Hispanic, 38% White, 36% Asian, and 9% multi-racial students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 4% 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 95.0%.

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	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams meet a minimum of twice weekly to examine research-based strategies for addressing needs, plan and implement new ways of teaching, monitor student work and progress, and adjust instruction as needed.

Impact

Through frequent and purposeful collaboration and unyielding support from school leaders, teachers participate in revising curricula, lessons and instruction to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of the school's instructional design, analyze student data, and make decisions that support students in mastering challenging curricula. This results in the promotion of greater curricular coherence and integration of the instructional shifts to the daily work of teaching and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- This year, teacher teams have been focusing on the Common Core Learning Standards, with a particular emphasis on writing. Teachers consistently analyze student writing to ascertain proficiency in various English language arts standards, such as writing informative and explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information effectively, introducing a topic clearly, providing a general observation and focus examining topics including formatting, illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension, and linking ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses.
- Team members collaboratively discuss and share new teaching strategies to engage students more deeply in content and analyze trends in student learning in their grade-level teams. They frequently examine student writing, with a particular focus on craft, precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, elaboration, topic development, concrete facts and supporting details, and interpretation.
- The focus of teacher teams is driven by the need to address gaps in student learning. Teachers work collectively to shape curriculum, support students to think critically, assess student work and data, and probe more deeply into the curriculum's content. For example, the fifth grade teacher team, using the ATLAS protocol from the National School Reform Faculty, analyzed "on demand" writing samples. They described their noticings and determined that students displayed difficulty with using craft in their narrative accounts. They also asserted that the students were using irrelevant, rather than precise, details and figurative language. In addition, they discussed and recorded the implications for future instructional practice.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices across classrooms are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching, are aligned to curriculum to accelerate student achievement, and routinely offer multiple entry points, including scaffolds and supports, for the school's relevant subgroups.

Impact

Instructional practices, which reflect the school's beliefs that students perform best when provided with appropriately challenging activities aligned to their achievement levels, result in higher-order thinking skills in student work products. However, there are missed opportunities to ensure extensions into the curricula through strategic questioning across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In a kindergarten class observed, the teachers grouped their students according to their most recent guided reading conference notes. One group focused on patterns, initial sounds, and picture cues to figure out unfamiliar words, another group used play-dough to create sight words, and other students read independently.
- In several classes, including art, teachers planned to meet the needs of high-level learners by providing more challenging tasks. For example, in a first-grade class, students were making text-to-self connections in order to “dive deeper” into books. The teacher planned to have her struggling students use a “think mark” on which they drew illustrations, whereas students on level included a title, connection, and an illustration, and higher level learners were provided opportunities to write more than one connection. Similarly, in the fifth grade, the teachers collectively decided to use a sixth grade health article entitled, “The Benefits of Laughter” to meet the needs of advanced learners as well as address the Common Core, specifically, writing informative or explanatory texts to present complex ideas and information clearly and accurately.
- Although in some classrooms teachers asked high-level questions, promoted discussions and cued student thinking, many asked low-level questions that required one-word responses, such as, “Did we meet the budget?” and “What is the sum?” Moreover, teachers in numerous classrooms essentially repeated answers and evaluated the accuracy of student responses rather than inviting the class to agree, disagree, elaborate upon the responses of their peers, or ask questions of one another. Consequently, opportunities for students to consistently demonstrate high levels of student engagement and participation are limited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula across content areas are coherent, aligned to the Common Core and content standards, and consistently provide opportunities to engage in academically demanding tasks

Impact

Careful curriculum design leads to instruction and tasks that accelerate student growth, further higher order thinking skills, and provide students with essential knowledge and skills to meet the real-world demands of college and postsecondary success. Thoughtful examination of the curricula also enables teachers to make informed decisions that have resulted in increased, progressive preparation for students to engage in challenging, higher-level work.

Supporting Evidence

- School curriculum maps in English language arts (ELA), math, and other content areas, including art, reflect a coherent set of experiences leading to the development of requisite knowledge and skills, sequencing and spiraling of concepts and skills, and the elimination of repetition in instruction.
- Some of the Common Core standards embedded in the school's curricular documents include quoting accurately from a text comparing and contrasting stories in the same genre, and determining a theme or central idea of a text.
- Curricula also reflect the inclusion of rigorous tasks, such as analyzing and engaging in strategic thinking and reasoning, as well as extended thinking, characterized as Levels 3 and 4, respectively, according to Webb's Depth of Knowledge tool. Such tasks were evident in a fifth grade class, during which time students were engaged in Socratic Seminar pertaining to the events and characters in *The Bully Book*, by Eric Kahn Gale, responded to one another's questions and comments about why the main character was singled out as "the Grunt," and the subject of an intricate bullying conspiracy to demonstrate their conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking.
- According to the school's most recent ratings on the 2013-2014 School Quality Snapshot, the school has met the target in both ELA and math, yielding percentages of 62% and 72%, respectively, for students at proficiency level 3 or 4.
- The median adjusted growth percentiles for English and math were 78 and 67, respectively and 79 and 74 in ELA and math for the school's lowest third.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and teachers gather a wide range of relevant data across most subjects to understand individual student and relevant subgroup performance, progress, and learning needs, and effectively use the results to make adjustments to curriculum and instruction.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers assess student learning and engage students in self- and peer-assessment to determine progress towards goals and modify curriculum units and lessons to meet student needs and improve academic outcomes for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Students use rubrics and regularly assess the work of their peers. In addition, they evaluate their own writing using rubrics and responding to questionnaires that encourage them to discern whether they have made the reason for their writing clear and explicit, provided details that support their topic, and whether their paragraphs have a clear focus. Consequently, students take ownership for their own learning and evaluate their own text-based writing.
- Across grades, students regularly write self- and peer-reflections for their work across the content areas. One fifth grade student wrote to his writing partner, “I really liked how you started your lead with what happened already, like a circular story. I also like how you used a lot of metaphors. My suggestion for your next step is to work on your spelling.”
- Teachers routinely check student understanding across classrooms using a variety of templates to record their conference notes, and they complete checklists during lessons to ascertain whether students are on target, need more support, or require extensions. In addition, the school’s literacy interventionist uses a communication log on which she identifies students’ strengths, strategic actions to work toward proficiently, and other comments, which she shares with the classroom teachers to ensure that teachers have a clear portrait of students’ needs.
- Analysis of data has led to changes in practice that have increased student outcomes, as noted in a 7.7% increase of all students scoring at proficiency in ELA and a 6.7% increase among students with disabilities

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations for all staff through grade meetings, observations, and training. The school community proactively advocates and partners with families to ensure reciprocal and staunch communication, shared support for student achievement, and readiness for college and careers.

Impact

The school's strong partnerships with families have led to sustainable, responsive approaches that result in parents having a heightened awareness of their role in supporting their children's progress towards meeting the school's high expectations. Students are prepared for the next level and have an increased sense of belonging and identification with their educational goals, which is leading to advancement of student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *myON* and *Think Central*, digital resources that complement the ELA and GO Math! curricula, which enable school leaders and teachers to track student reading activity and progress and communicate results to parents. Parents have access to results of benchmark assessment reports, performance on close reading tasks, forecasts of long-term reading growth, and progress in math. In addition, various communiqués, such as monthly newsletters and progress reports reflecting student progress on unit assessments and independent reading levels. In addition, teachers and representatives from the school's network affiliation also provide workshops, such as "ELA Instruction at PS 144" and "Common Core-Aligned Assessments," to provide parents with information on the instructional shifts. Many teachers in the school have established individual websites that include links to various resources to assist parents with supporting their children at home.
- Teachers are provided with professional learning opportunities to hone their pedagogical skills. Observations, coupled with detailed feedback, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, holds staff accountable for meeting expectations.
- Through the consistent practice of engaging students in self- and peer-assessment using rubrics, teachers ensure that students have a solid understanding of their own individual learning goals, and communicate these and other school information regularly and frequently to families. In addition, teachers frequently send home student writing, accompanied by rubrics, and encourage parents to provide comments to their children using the language therein. For example, a parent of a third grader suggested to her son that he, "draft ideas individually and separate them into different paragraphs." She also reminded her child to "be certain to include a topic sentence and a conclusion," evidence that parents are aware of next learning steps for their child.
- The clear communication of high expectations to all in the school community and support to achieve these goals has led to improved student achievement, as reflected in their recent status as a *Reward* School indicated on the 2013-2014 School Quality Snapshot.