



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Gwendoline N. Alleyne School

Elementary School Q152

**33-52 62 Street
Queens
NY 11377**

Principal: Vincent Vitolo

**Date of review: April 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

The School Context

The Gwendolyn Alleyne School is an elementary school with 1,379 students from pre-kindergarten through grade six. The school population comprises 1% Black, 45% Hispanic, 4% White, 49% Asian and 1% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 28% 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 96.0%.

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 | Celebration | 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 | 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 | Additional Findings | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricula decisions have created coherence across grades and subject areas and promoted college and career readiness skills. Data-driven refinements of curricula and tasks have provided all learners' with access to cognitively engaging learning experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- In mathematics, to align curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards, the school uses the Go Math! Program supplemented with Ready Math and People's Measuring Up for math. Curriculum maps and lesson plans integrate the instructional shifts. For example, curriculum reflects problems that require fluency, application and deep understanding. In English language arts (ELA), for grades kindergarten through grade five, the school uses the Ready Gen program supplemented with Ready for ELA and People's Measuring Up for ELA. In addition, in kindergarten through grade two, teachers use Wilson's FUNdations for development of phonemic awareness, phonics and spelling. The ELA curriculum for grade six is Scholastic's Code X program. Curriculum maps and lesson plans across all grades and content areas strategically integrate the instructional shifts that reflect building knowledge through content rich fiction and non-fiction complex texts, the use of evidence from texts, and the specific teaching of the three tiers of vocabulary that is coherent across grades and content areas. These instructional shifts were selected based on data obtained from the NYS item analysis, students' writing work and teachers' observations of students.
- The school incorporates Common Core literacy skills and the instructional shifts, such as reading and writing with evidence from complex text and the teaching of academic vocabulary in science and social studies. Teachers developed curriculum maps and expanded the resources used to include additional non-fiction texts that align with each unit. The additional texts include trade books, Science News and Scholastic News. Since the trade books include all content topics and are written on a wide range of reading levels, this provides multiple points of entry into the curriculum and access for all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For higher performing students, there are challenge activities requiring students to think deeper. In a first grade curriculum map and lesson plan there was a challenge sheet that required students to state an inference and use evidence from a text to support their thinking.
- Universal Design for Learning principles supports instructional planning of lessons for ELLs and students with disabilities. Lesson plans include multiple presentations of content, flexible options for student engagement and/or flexible methods of expression and assessment. Lesson plans also include scaffold questions using Webb's Depth of Knowledge tool to provide an array of leveled questions that require students to use recall, skill/concept, strategic and extending thinking allowing all learners to participate and access the curriculum. For example, a first grade lesson included "Who can name words that will help us identify sequence?" and "How does a writer create a narrative with sequencing to create a sense of closure?" "Create your own narrative."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Instructional practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best. There are strategic entry points into the curricula and high quality extensions for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

Across all grades, teaching practices consistently reflect challenging learning tasks that engage students. While teachers regularly provide multiple entry points to positively involve English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD) in meaningful tasks; high-quality supports are not always in place to address the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices align with the school's belief that students learn best when they are highly engaged in rigorous instruction that provide multiple entry points. In literacy-based classrooms, there are leveled texts and trade books used across subject areas. Mathematical tasks allow students to figure things out either through concrete, representational or abstractly. For example, in one second grade math class, students used unifix cubes for addition and subtraction activities. In Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classrooms, students had access to counters, hundreds chart, dry erase boards and play money as they worked on math activities.
- Support charts in classrooms provide sentence frames to support expressive language through "accountable talk" and questions that promote higher-level thinking. For example, "Can you tell me why you think that?" "Why do we have different answers?" "I agree/disagree because.... Higher level thinking and participation was observed across classrooms. In one third grade classroom, students were measuring. In response to the teacher's question, "Why do we have different answers?" One student replied, "Answers may be different because somebody might not have lined up the ruler straight." Another student added, "They didn't start at zero."
- In seven out of eight classrooms visited, teachers grouped students and provided differentiated tasks based on students' learning needs. For example, in one third grade classroom, the teacher used the item analysis from a practice ELA assessment to group students into three areas, based on identified needs; one for students requiring comprehension strategies, one for students requiring analyzing text and stating the main idea in their own words, and another group for ELLs to use laptops and Google translate to create a PowerPoint presentation with unfamiliar vocabulary words they found in the practice New York State English as Second Language Achievement Test booklets. However, in one first grade English language arts class students worked on identifying and using temporal words in stories to create a sense of closure at the end of a story without providing high-quality supports for newly arrived English language learners, which limited their ability to fully access the curriculum.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teachers use common assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned to the school's curricula and the Common Core Learning Standards to monitor student progress. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect ongoing checks for understanding and student assessments.

Impact

The analysis and tracking of student data leads to actionable feedback to students and effective curricula and instructional adjustments that meet the learning needs of all students. Although teachers' assessment practices consistently include checks for understanding, strategic adjustments to teaching practices based on these checks is not an embedded practice across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers create and use assessments, rubrics and the school's grading policy, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the school's curricula. On student work posted on bulletin boards and contained in student portfolios contained actionable feedback provided by teachers in the form of "next steps" to students. For example, feedback on student work stated, "I like the way you identified the main idea of the text. Next time, include specific details and evidence about what the Russian children do."
- The school uses baseline and three benchmark assessments, such as practice Measure of Student Learning and iReady assessments throughout the school year. The information from these assessments enables administrators and teachers to monitor student progress and make curricula and instructional adjustments and provide additional academic intervention services to address the needs of identified students. Data analysis revealed that several students did not demonstrate sufficient progress in ELA and math as evidenced in iReady assessments, when teachers compared the results from the benchmark two exam, to the benchmark three exam. As a result, these students were identified to receive academic support services during the school day and registered for the Saturday extra help program.
- Across classrooms, students are required to peer and self-assess. After assessments have been scored, students review their item analysis along with teachers and/or peer comments. Students use this information to establish goals. On one student's goal setting sheet it stated, "After looking at the results from the Comprehensive Assessment of Reading Skills and iReady assessments, I will work on improving vocabulary context and stating details. After conferring with my teacher and using my item analysis, I believe my primary goal should be vocabulary. I plan on meeting this goal by reading on to look for clues, using substitute words, using iReady to practice, and reflecting on my work."
- During classroom observations, teachers were observed checking for understanding through conferencing, circulating to groups and asking students to use thumbs up or down. In six out of eight classrooms observed teachers did not record or use this information to make curricula or instructional changes. Although teachers' assessment practices consistently include checks for understanding, adjustments to teaching practices are not an embedded practice across the school.

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teaching and learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school successfully partners with families to position students on a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

High expectations are consistently communicated resulting in a culture of mutual accountability and improved learning outcomes for adults and students. Families understand the academic and personal behaviors required for college and career readiness and actively support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal consistently communicates high expectations for teaching and learning in the opening year packet, school bulletins/handbook, grade and department meetings, all professional learning workshops and in the school-wide instructional focus which is to increase student engagement by employing a range of sustainable techniques practices and tasks that empower learners and fosters autonomy and achievement. Teachers are held accountable for the instructional focus through classroom observations using the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*, component 3c, student engagement. Teachers are provided with feedback and next steps to improve their practice. For example, the instructional focus states, “To increase student engagement by employing a range of sustainable techniques, practices and tasks that empower learners and fosters autonomy and achievement.”
- To support teachers’ professional learning on the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the school conducts interactive workshops where teachers identify “look-fors” on component(s). They observe videos of lessons from Teach-boost engage NY, and the Teaching Channel to gather evidence and rate component(s) of the framework using evidence and language of the rubric to support their rating. This process is used to assist teachers in improving their practice in areas where they need to grow, based on next steps contained in their individual *Advance* observation reports and feedback received from peers during inter-visitations.
- Across the school the majority of teachers use *Class DoJo*, an on-line resource, which allows two-way communication between teachers and families regarding students’ behavioral and academic issues. Additionally teachers send out monthly newsletters to families that outline the units of study, school events and field trips students will engage in for the month. On Tuesday afternoons during parent engagement time, teachers provide workshops to families on the Common Core curricula across subject areas. These workshops are interactive where parents and students engaged in an art activity that was interdisciplinary. Students had to identify and explain to their families how to use patterns, sorting and symmetry to create an object. Following the activity, students and their parents created computer-generated vocabulary cards, using Study Stack, a computerized program for parents to use at home, partnering with the school to reinforce vocabulary with their child.

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

Findings

Distributed leadership structures are embedded across the school. The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and have strengthened teacher’s instructional capacity.

Impact

Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school which has created school-wide instructional coherence and led to improved student outcomes for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The data inquiry team in English language arts analyzed student work. During their analysis, the team noticed that across grades a large percentage of students have difficulty with vocabulary. As an intervention, teachers decided to collectively use tiered levels of vocabulary. Teachers pre-assessed students and determined that Tier II and Tier three words were areas of challenge for most students. On a weekly basis, each grade team identifies tier two vocabulary focus words that students will interface with for the week. Every ELA teacher on the grade introduces these words and provides synonyms and antonyms, along with visual supports where appropriate. Across subject areas, teachers integrate the focus words into their lessons with the purpose of providing practice to reinforce these words and meanings. For tier three words, each content area teacher evaluated their units of study and identified content specific words unfamiliar to students. At the start of each week, teachers in content areas pre-load vocabulary by explicitly introducing the content-specific words with clear succinct student-friendly definitions, and where possible, visual supports. As a result, all learners’ lexile reading levels increased as measured by the iReady on-line diagnostic assessments in vocabulary sub-skills, including context clues, root words and affixes.
- Teachers hold leadership roles within teacher teams and assume responsibility for coordinating activities and meetings within their grade. Teachers are empowered within their teams to share best practices and adjust curricula and teaching practices to meet the learning needs of all students and improve student outcomes. For example, teachers identified that Ready Gen was not providing students with sufficient opportunities for students to practice reading multiple texts, stating the main idea and linking themes. As a result, they selected literature from Literacy by Design to provide opportunities for students to have additional practice with these skills.
- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity by engaging in collaborative discussions, sharing best practices, conducting inter-visitations and using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to improve their craft and improve student outcomes. As one teacher stated, “By observing colleagues and watching videos of teacher lessons, I have seen what highly effective questioning looks like in a classroom. I now use the Depth of Knowledge wheel to pre-plan an array of questions and protocols to launch discussions that lead to student- to-student conversations.”