



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Flushing Heights School**

**Elementary School Q163**

**159-01 59<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11365**

**Principal: Nicole Bullen-Stinchcomb**

**Date of review: March 31, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

## The School Context

Flushing Heights School is an elementary school with 642 students from grade Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 15% Hispanic, 3% White, and 79% Asian students. The student body includes 41% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled, and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 97.6%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The school's leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations connected to a college and career path to students and families. Guidance advisements provide all students with supports that prepare them for their next levels.

### Impact

As a result of the school's strategically designed structures for effectively communicating a common set of high expectations, all stakeholders strengthen partnerships with families and elevate student learning and independence.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parent workshops, student progress reports, monthly newsletters, ongoing parent outreach and weekly contact with parents ensure students and families remain informed of student progress. For example, students and families across the school have access to online literacy and assessment tools ensuring students move toward reading complex text and focus on strengthening areas of challenge in reading comprehension. In addition, to further include parents in the life of the school and to address their needs Coffee and Conversations with the Parent Coordinator and Special Education Service providers, English as a second language classes are offered to parents, and the school's Parent Teacher Association has organized family exercise programs including Zumba.
- In preparation for college and career, all students are expected to strengthen their reading stamina by reading every night and engaging in real world writing experiences for a variety of purposes including persuading and informing their reading audience. As a result, students are generally reading at least one to two grade levels above what is expected. Students are offered numerous opportunities during and after school to read complex texts independently and challenge themselves to read non-fiction and challenging texts. Classroom libraries and online reading tools allow students exposure to books above their independent reading level.
- The school devoted the first three days of school to ensuring that teachers confer with students and support them in creating appropriate learning goals. Teachers routinely confer with all students, including lowest and highest achievers, provide guidance to students on gauging their progress toward standards and beyond and identify next steps toward achievement of the goals set. These one-on-one conferences help to set the tone, help teachers learn student's personalities, learning styles, understanding of grade level expectations and what will be expected of them during the class and school year.
- As part of the school's beliefs, students are guided toward independence. For example, students maintain planners and are expected to organize their notes and homework in the planners. Students expressed that after they complete assignments, parents sign the planners each day. The strategic focus on guiding students through organizing for effort and developing disciplined study habits prepares students for the expectations of real life.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teachers work effectively in collaborative teams within and across grades to share their practice, analyze data from common assessments, monitor student progress and make modifications to curriculum.

### Impact

These structured collaborations result in shared leadership structures and the implementation of curricular adjustments aimed at improving student learning outcomes.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are currently visiting each other's classrooms to observe practice. One teacher new to the school said she observed effective teaching practices and new ways to teach reading. This in turn helped her revise her instructional plans to become more effective in teaching reading using the workshop model in turn noting increased student mastery of essential reading skills, such as comprehension, fluency, and their use of academic vocabulary.
- Although teachers are clearly evaluating the impact of curriculum on student learning through analysis of assessment data and student work products, they have not yet engaged in inquiry around pedagogical decision-making and how their practice informs outcomes for all learners. The fifth grade team was observed looking at success, strengths and weaknesses of student work products. Sample student work was shown on their short responses after reading a story about Clara Brown. Teachers shared the revisions to their PowerPoint slides for individual classes, but were not able to demonstrate changes to larger maps and unit plans.
- Across teams, most teachers are able to articulate the instructional focus of increasing student engagement by continuing to expose students to discussions and learning activities that elicit their thinking and ultimately improve instruction. During one meeting, teachers were gathering and tracking data to identify skills that students displayed in their writing in the former grades in order to make decisions about what targets needed to be addressed at their current grade level.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Curricula in all subjects are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Strategically designed, challenging academic tasks highlight higher order thinking skills for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

### Impact

As a result of the school's curricular decisions, across grades and subjects the school's curricula, engages students in meaningful, rigorous, authentic tasks that elevate critical thinking and prepare students for college and career.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students write across an array of topics and genres. A review of student portfolios reveals a volume of high quality student writing. For example, in a fourth grade class, students read a myriad of short text material and trade books and were required to synthesize information from what they read and then write a literary essay selecting from one of two possible topics around the study of how Native Americans used their environment to survive.
- Social Studies and Science content is incorporated into the school's own designed English language arts units integrating the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. A review of English language arts units across grades demonstrate a range of targeted standards that include reading, writing, listening and speaking standards addressed in units. In addition, a review of unit plans reveal that students are expected to read a collection of complex texts that complement the units.
- The school strategically embeds tasks into the curricula to make student thinking visible. For example, in a kindergarten class, learners were immersed in a social studies unit about family and students and were expected to draw and label a color, symbol and image that depicted their family. Using the academic vocabulary, one student drew and labeled a purple sweater and expressed it was her mother's favorite. Another student drew and labeled a heart and expressed that the symbol represented the love the family had for each other and yet another student drew and labeled a beach scene as the image where the family had the most fun.
- Lesson plans reviewed infused real world culminating academic tasks. For example, in a fifth grade special education class, students had a choice of writing an essay or letter about an individual studied from the past. Plans stated that students would be able to develop their own Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions using a chart which contained levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 sentence starters to help inform their writing. Activities were taken directly from the Common Core Learning Standards and allowed students to make real life connections to their own lives.
- All classroom lessons include the "What, Why and How" known throughout the school as the WWH process. Teachers' plans indicate time to engage students in conversations about What they are learning, discuss Why they are learning the work, and How the strategy can support them in being successful. Throughout the lesson and during the share, teachers consistently engage students in the WWH process.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders and teachers believe students learn best through active participation in their own learning. Teachers facilitate high-level student group discussions and work products reflect high levels of thinking.

### **Impact**

Across classrooms teachers operate from a coherent set of beliefs, facilitate student deep discussions about their work, and engage students in collaborative learning experiences, thus elevating student thinking and resulting in the production of quality student work that demonstrates student ownership.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Students participate in group inquiry, gather information, draw conclusions, and routinely engage in discussions about their work. For example, in a third grade class, students were provided with a map, and a specific country or state had been highlighted on the map. Based on the geographic location of the state or country, students discussed how the geographic location affected the culture and lifestyle of the group of people living in the area. Students used the information to develop educated guesses about the population's clothing, food, occupations and forms of recreation. Students in one group animatedly expressed the people would wear boots and heavy layers of clothing because the state was located far from the equator and near the ocean causing the climate to be cold and snowy.
- Students in a Kindergarten/first grade special education class were looking closely at photographs to craft stories about sea turtles. Students had modified rubrics and were using different graphic organizers to work together to answer essential questions and then write in response to the photographs they saw. Some students went online with the assistance of a paraprofessional to conduct research and find out more information.
- Informed by Danielson's Framework for Teaching, school leaders and staff have focused specifically on using questions and discussion techniques. In all classrooms visited, students engaged in conversations about their work. In addition, teacher questioning was tiered' and teachers posed a range of questions from low to high.
- Instructional tasks and student work products promote both students' creative and critical thinking levels. For example, in a fifth grade class students worked cooperatively in groups to craft an argumentative essay and gather evidence to support claims based on an article entitled Death and Disease. Moreover, students were expected to integrate key ideas from the text and to use a rubric to evaluate and critique the student group performance

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

The school designs and uses common assessments to monitor student progress toward mastery of standards and provides all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities with targeted feedback.

### **Impact**

Assessment outcomes determine curricular and instructional adjustments and students assess the quality of their work resulting in increased student achievement and student ownership of learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- During the beginning of the school year, teachers and administrators review past year school assessment data including but not limited to student baseline data, reading assessments, classwork, and teachers' formative data notes to gain a clear picture of where students fall on the continuum toward grade level standards. The analysis of both formative and summative data is used to adjust lessons and provide students with targeted supports including after school programs, tutorial sessions, and book clubs.
- Students expressed that they aspired to be at a level three or four and articulated that they use rubric and checklist criteria to reach standard levels and beyond. Students also assess the quality of their own work using rubric criteria and often collaboratively create high level rubrics and criteria for their own work. For example, through the analysis of exemplars, students in a fifth grade class determined the criteria for writing an analytic essay by looking at the organization, style, and mechanics of the samples written by their classmates. Students determined what a level 1, 2, 3, or 4 essay would look like in each of the aforementioned categories.
- Teachers routinely check for student understanding of lessons taught by conferring with students and annotating student misconceptions. In addition, both teachers and students consistently check their progress in reading by using checklists and rubrics created with the classroom teacher and through feedback in peer sessions.
- Assessments are differentiated for all students including ELLs and SWDs to capture student mastery of particular concepts and their ability to apply strategies independently. Information from these assessments is used to adjust lessons, unit plans and teaching practices. The school has also implemented a system for monitoring student progress using SCAN. SCAN enables teachers to assess and document how students are progressing during, before and after classroom lessons and plan small/flexible groups as needed.
- Students also engage in the process of self-assessment through group conversations, peer checklists/rubrics and classroom feedback sessions. This provides multiple opportunities to evaluate and monitor student progress. In addition, student checklists and rubrics provide students the opportunity to assess their work or the work of their peers before receiving teacher feedback.