

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Queens Valley

Elementary School Q164

**138-01 77 Avenue
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Anne Alfonso

**Dates of review: February 11, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango**

The School Context

P.S. 164 Queens Valley is an elementary/middle school with 620 students from prekindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 6% Black, 26% Hispanic, 36% White, 31% Asian and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.1%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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	Developing
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.	Celebration	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.	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

3.4 High Expectations

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* is utilized to consistently communicate high expectations to staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to students and their families connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

An environment of accountability has been established through consistent communication to staff, resulting in a culture for learning and professionalism. Ongoing communication is leading parents toward an understanding of the path necessary for college and career readiness. Teacher feedback to students guides their learning and provides direction on how to move to the next level in order to improve outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations for classroom instruction through school-wide memoranda and structures for professional learning. Teachers are held accountable through frequent cycles of observation using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Data from these observations, as well as feedback from school-based professional learning committees has resulted in professional learning opportunities for all staff. For example, a team was developed with a focus on differentiated instruction and has resulted in the facilitation of a workshop for staff on the use of online methodology to support all learners. Teachers express that they are encouraged to implement these new strategies in their classrooms.
- School staff utilizes rubrics to provide meaningful feedback to ensure that students are aware of their next learning steps. This was evident during the student meeting where a student shared that his next step in the writing process was to be more organized. He added that his teacher shared the “boxes and bullets” strategy to support his work and he feels that it has helped him improve his writing.
- Parents attend events focused on grade specific learning standards focused on providing opportunities for parents to support the school partner in improving student outcomes, while promoting a path toward college and career readiness. For example, a first grade math workshop titled “A World of Fractions” was facilitated to model how parents can assist their children in mastering the concept of fractions by making real world connections. In addition, grade level newsletters are disseminated to parents to ensure that families are aware of what their children are learning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school's instructional focus and core beliefs around student learning through using knowledge of pupils to increase rigor through high-level student discussion, experiential learning and close reading, is inconsistently reflected across the school. Within some classrooms there are varying levels of student thinking and participation in their learning and work products.

Impact

Uneven implementation of curriculum and practices across classrooms limit challenge for all learners impacting quality of work products, growth in student progress and opportunities for students to engage in rigorous discussions and engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Although in many classrooms students are asked to work in groups or partnerships to complete tasks, some students chose to work independently without engaging in discussions with their peers or did not have guided tasks and/or activities to take them to a clear understanding of the lesson objective. For example, in one reading lesson observed, although the teacher used a variety of resources, such as a video, vocabulary lists and discussion prompts to provide access and content to students, the design of work time which asked students to chunk a small section of text, did not further their understanding of the lesson or provide them opportunity to engage with their peers.
- Although there is clear evidence of rigorous habits within curriculum and tasks, some teachers observed struggled with skills and strategies to promote and support high-level thinking in the classroom. For example, in one classroom observed, although students learned content, the teacher's questioning and work time planned, did not bring students to the intended objective of the lesson which was to identify how authors use details and illustrations to develop a story. In another seventh grade science class, the teacher spoke less about content and more about the aesthetics of a project and students spent time gluing their work to construction paper.
- In other classrooms observed, teacher strategies and scaffolds provided all learners an opportunity to develop higher-order thinking skills through tasks that were both rigorous and aligned to student ability. For example, in one seventh grade class, students were working in groups and reading a variety of above grade level literature that culminated in students developing an argumentative essay where they needed to address claim and counter-claim, using skills taught within the unit, including building suspense, as well as specific text-based examples. In another first grade classroom, students were exploring character traits of Theodore Roosevelt and writing opinion papers using text-based evidence to support their statements. Students were actively engaged in the work with their peers and were clearly able to identify how Roosevelt's character traits made him a strong leader both in their writing and in deep discussion in their groups.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school has developed assessment tools and rubrics that are aligned to the curriculum and accurately measure the effectiveness of curricular decisions on student learning.

Impact

As a result of aligned and scaffolded assessment practices with corresponding student-friendly tools, teachers and students have a clear understanding of gaps in learning and student progress. Within and across grades, teachers and students share a common academic language that allows for clear feedback and next steps to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- In order to effectively measure student literacy, teachers use assessments that scaffold and align to the standards and the school's curricula selections. For example, to measure the impact of reading instruction and student progress, grades kindergarten through second, administer Fountas and Pinnell benchmarks. These tools progress to teacher-created reading benchmarks in grades three through six and lexile levels are addressed using Ed Performance in the middle schools grades. Teachers use this data throughout the year to gauge fluency, decoding, vocabulary and comprehension skills and to make necessary adjustments in maps and tasks, as well as for daily literacy instructional planning.
- In conjunction with Go Math pre and post unit assessments, the school also engages in a deep data dive in the beginning of the school year using the item skills analysis from the New York State exam, as well as periodic benchmarks in November and February. This data is organized school-wide, by grade, by class and by standard traits, isolating strengths and gaps. Teachers and teams, align this data to student work products to refine units and tasks as well as for individual goal setting and grouping at the classroom level.
- Student work products within classrooms, on bulletin boards and during small group had rubrics, checklists and teacher feedback addressing standards and next steps. Students were able to articulate what they had learned and how teacher feedback and checklists guide them in moving along the continuum of the rubrics. For example, one third grade student was able to describe how he read both fiction and non-fiction text about the differences between urban and rural areas. He was also able to isolate and demonstrate how teacher feedback around using more explicit details and transitions, led to the use of these skills effectively in his final piece of writing. Another eighth grade student explained his work from a culminating task where he was to write about "The Little Rock Nine". He was able to articulate the importance of close reading and isolating specific text-based evidence to support his claim, as was required by the task and targeted within the accompanying rubric.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teachers within and across grades have purposefully aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Effective use of student work products and clear benchmarking is embedded in curricula and task design to ensure access and engagement for all learners.

Impact

Teacher focus on refinement of curricula and tasks support alignment, rigor and access to ensure that student learning needs are appropriately addressed and there are ongoing challenges for all students as evident in tasks and student work products within and across grades.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and teacher teams work in grade bands to study vertical alignment of standards in each content area. This work includes student work norming around what quality work should look like at the end of each unit of study to lead them towards proficiency of grade standards. For example, within a planning guide that focused on narrative writing, maps included focus questions for teachers such as “What do standards expect from students? Which strands are being addressed and what does the rubric expect from students?”
- Inter-disciplinary curricula are embedded within and across grades in literacy maps to ensure coherence and balance of fiction and non-fiction text. Teachers have built in authentic text and primary sources in order to develop higher-order thinking skills. For example, in a 7th grade literacy unit entitled, “Nature’s Fury”, students read a series of non-fiction and fiction text around natural disasters that focused on the overarching theme of how natural disasters impact the individual, the community and the world.
- Curriculum maps in all content areas include essential questions, performance-based pre and post assessments, sequenced texts or problems, instructional tasks, academic vocabulary, specific scaffolds and enrichment activities.
- Teacher teams engaged in targeted task design that includes evaluation of student understanding of content, as well as quality of questions asked within tasks. In math, teachers engaged in a standards dive by, using student work aligned to the standards and multiple programs aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, to find and fill gaps within school curricula. As a result, all math tasks include opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking. Teachers focus on evidence of student thinking to further plan to meet specific needs of students they teach.
- Student scaffolds and supports are present within units, as well as on consistent classroom charts, vocabulary word walls aligned to units, Leveled literacy intervention program, and the use of the Hochman Writing Method across grades.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The principal has established a culture for learning where teacher teams and school leaders work collectively to ensure curriculum, tasks and assessments propel student learning to the next level. This work is driven by clear protocols, a variety of student data streams and opportunity for teacher choice and leadership in their learning experiences.

Impact

This strong, self-directed learning environment is supporting teacher growth in specific and targeted ways, leading to improvements in practice and a stronger focus on advancing student progress by analyzing pedagogy and its impact on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- There are clear school-wide structures centered around the instructional focus, where teacher teams have organized professional learning committees. These teams set goals, action plans, next steps, and organize their own professional development. These self-directed learning communities run in cycles and are shared in Google drive for the entire school community. Examples include, supporting students in the bottom-third through academic conversations, using text structures to engage students in critical thinking and bridging social studies and science to the Ready Gen curriculum in order to build greater coherence in grades K-2.
- Teacher Teams have established protocols to look at student work and tasks and use data from this process to test instructional strategies they feel will best support learners. For example, across grades, teachers are working on instructional strategies, such as deepening questioning skills using Webb's Depth of Knowledge levels to allow for more critical thinking and discussion to better engage students in developing viable arguments in math.
- The principal has organized a committee of teacher leaders who support teacher teams and provide professional development to their colleagues. These teachers consistently analyze data, survey teams and receive Advance feedback from the principal to modify the school-wide goals and professional learning plans to best support improvements in teacher effectiveness.