



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Edith K. Bergtraum

Elementary School Q165

**70-35 150 Street
Queens
NY 11367**

Principal: Raquel DeMillio

**Date of review: March 30, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Catherine M. Powis**

The School Context

Edith K. Bergtraum is an elementary school with 730 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 12% Black, 19% Hispanic, 13% White, and 55% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.5%.

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	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Assessment for and of learning is an embedded practice across classrooms, teams, and school level through the use of teacher-created assessments that are aligned to the curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and self- and peer-assessment across all classrooms.

Impact

Students are aware of their next learning steps through meaningful teacher and peer feedback. Teachers make effective instructional adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Creating, revising, and refining rubrics is a regular, grade-level team practice to ensure their alignment to the school's choice of 'power leverage standards', performance-based assessments (PBA), and tasks embedded in units of study. For example, the informational writing rubric was combined with a narrative writing rubric to assess a new, hybrid type of writing which students are learning. Also, when PBAs to determine student mastery of goals in literacy and math are refined, the corresponding rubric is revised. Ready Gen rubrics are modified to increase rigor in tasks, such as, assessing essay writing as opposed to just paragraph writing. These assessment tools provide meaningful feedback for both teachers and students and a trajectory toward student mastery.
- Student work on display in classrooms and hallways include rubric and task-specific teacher feedback on post-it notes and directly on rubrics and student work. When interviewing students, most were able to describe in detail what strategies they need to work on to improve their writing. One grade 5 student shared that her Socratic Seminar response was intended to extend her thinking following a seminar in class, while in another piece of writing she needs to work on using a journal format instead of just responding to questions. A grade 2 student shared her self- and peer- feedback to assess her narrative writing. A grade 4 student shared her opinion essay that was peer-assessed by her group, teacher assessed using a task-specific rubric, and was well aware that she needed to work on "...clearly addressing a counter-claim and why it is not my view" in subsequent writing and when practicing in an assigned group to strengthen counter-claims.
- In line with the school's instructional focus on assessment of learning, in every classroom visited, embedded checks for understanding were evident. In a grade 5 class, the teacher used Flicker.com to conduct a quick pre-assessment of the learning target and pre-requisite skills to achieve it. The results determined which of the tiered work stations each student would be assigned. Students would then be re-assessed to identify growth at the close of the lesson as one of the exit options. In other classrooms, 'turn and talk' was used when students were introduced to the learning target at the rug. Teacher(s) listened in and asked partners to share what they discussed. In a kindergarten class, students were using white boards to display their responses to counting by 10s as the teacher assessed their needs. Several classes offered student-friendly checklists and "I can" organizers aligned to the task at hand so that students can self- and peer- assess as they worked independently, in groups, or with partners. In a grade 2 math ICT class, one student was patiently explaining to another why $27-7$ does not equal 21, but equals 20. Also, in grade 2, stations are equipped with comprehension station checklists for students to self-assess their work.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching strategies across classrooms provide multiple entry points for all learners and opportunities for students to discuss their work with peers.

Impact

Extensions into the curricula that are advanced by high level questioning techniques are not an embedded practice that results in student ownership of learning in all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 2 class, students were grouped in work stations, the school's hallmark for providing tiered tasks as multiple entry points. Two students were partner reading at the rug as they referred to their "Reading Buddy Strategies" list to help each other. Another student was reading a leveled text independently. A small group of students worked with the teacher to unpack the task understanding how to use textual evidence to understand character traits. The push-in English as a second language teacher served as a support to five English language learners as they practiced the same skill set, using another leveled text and more support in vocabulary and fluency.
- In some classrooms, during the mini lesson introduction of the learning target at the rug, questioning techniques did not always encourage DOK levels 3 & 4 thinking, and were mostly low level "What" questions. Also, wait time for students to formulate their responses was limited or non-existent as the teacher quickly offered the answer. Furthermore, some questions which were posed to one student, such as, "...what does that mean to you?" left the rest of the class disengaged from the conversation, as well as the repeating of the students' responses in complete sentences, conveyed to them that there is no need to be precise and thoughtful in their responses; therefore, most students did not participate while some responded with one or a few word answers. Most of the questioning was teacher-directed and did not engage students in a volley of questioning and discussion among themselves, limiting their level of thinking, participation, and ownership of learning.
- The school's instructional focus informed by component 3d: Assessment of Learning in Danielson's Framework is evident across classrooms. For example, in a grade 4 Integrated Co-Teaching class, students were engaged in a brief discussion about how they will assess the learning objective prompted by the question, "How will I assess my learning objective?", which encouraged ownership of their learning. However, there were missed opportunities in other classrooms to extend student ownership as the line of questioning did not extend student thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Higher order thinking skills are emphasized in curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that are planned and refined to strategically incorporate instructional shifts using student work and data.

Impact

Curricula coherence is evident across grades and subjects and all learners have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging so they can demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty are well aware of the instructional shifts and incorporate them in units of study and lesson plans as an embedded activity across subjects and grades. Several resources, such as Ready Gen and Go Math, are utilized to ensure alignment with Common Core expectations. Grade level teams plan together regularly during multiple, weekly common planning periods to ensure curricular coherence. Vertical teams extend coherency across grades. All teams enter revisions and updates in red on Atlas Rubicon mapping so that changes are transparent and shared by all. Units are accompanied by samples of strategies and scaffolds, student work, and rubrics to support all students in accomplishing their “I can...” statements to achieve daily learning targets. Through this sharing, teachers have noticed that students are more prepared for the next level of learning in September as teachers in prior grades know what to prioritize in their lessons. Furthermore, social studies and science are integrated into literacy units and also supported by cluster teachers in specific grades.
- Grade level teams write, monitor, and revise units of study using the template design of an online resource, Atlas Rubicon, to ensure that the needs of a diverse student population are met. The school refers to this process as the “personalization” of the curriculum. A Ready Gen *Personalization Protocol* is used to revise/update Ready Gen which includes examination of performance-based assessments, rubrics, student work, and alignment of lessons and resources to ensure necessary modifications for all students to have access. In math, students are held to rigorous criteria for showing their work and demonstrating multiple ways to complete a word problem. Grade level math teams consistently examine student work to ensure high levels of student understanding. Instructional strategies, such as, C.R.A.W.: Concrete>Representational>Abstract>Words, are incorporated into lesson plans supplemented with visuals and manipulatives. These strategies are also evident in planning for Integrated-Co-Teaching and the school’s ASD Nest program, a program for high functioning students with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) classes. To date, grades 3 through 5 average student proficiency on State math assessments is above 3.0.
- Teacher teams create authentic tasks that serve as formative and summative assessments embedded in each unit of study and accompanying lessons. Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels measure the rigor of tasks which very often refer to real world application. Checklists and rubrics accompany academic tasks and indicate levels of DOK to achieve level 4. For example, a performance-based task at the end of a grade 5 unit asked students to respond to the question: How are acts of courage revealed? by writing an informative/explanatory text to examine this topic. They must include graphic organizers or visuals to demonstrate their thinking as needed and follow the writing process and self-assess along the way.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to staff. The school partners with parents and effectively conveys expectations connected to career and college readiness habits.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability is shared by staff and school leaders who successfully partner with parents to support student progress toward high expectations for success.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high levels of expectations around buy-in related to professionalism and instruction, by strategically surveying teachers to determine their professional learning preferences and needs. This is coupled with frequent feedback to teachers in key areas, such as capturing the school’s focus on assessment of learning (3d), which was evident across all classrooms visited. Additional surveys are conducted on a twelve-week cycle and used to help monitor and revise the professional learning plan developed by the Professional Learning Committee (PLC). Monday afternoons and United of Federation Teacher contract Circular 6 periods, are devoted to professional learning conducted for and by teachers in addition to inter-visitations to share best practices and opportunities for colleagues to provide peer feedback. In order to create a coherent, systemic way to communicate these expectations, school leaders launched the use of Google Apps for Education in September, 2014. Teachers share a mutual accountability in meeting and contributing to the expectations and vision they share with school leaders for students to succeed.
- Parents are quick to express their appreciation for being invited as partners with staff in their children’s education. Parents spoke of several examples of how teachers, school leaders, and the parent coordinator keep them informed of grade level curriculum expectations and how to help their child meet grade level standards. For example, parent workshops are provided on a weekly, grade rotating basis during parent engagement time to help parents understand shifts in instruction, grasping Common Core concepts, and practice using technology that supports instruction, such as, Brain Pop, Think Central, and Imagine Learning. One parent shared how her child’s teacher sends work home with rubrics so that expectations are understood. Additionally, students’ math and English language arts goals, frequently co-created with students, are shared with parents including actionable next steps.
- Parents are also offered opportunities to improve their skills in order to be able to help their children learn. For example, the popular *Crossroads Café* workshops are offered for parents to elevate language skills in order to help students with reading and homework. Parenting leadership workshops help parents respond to their child’s problems, resolve conflict peacefully, and communicate assertively. Furthermore, families are given copies of the school’s parent-friendly monthly curriculum map for their child’s grade, which is also published on the school website. In this way, parents express that they are very aware of the instruction that is taking place in the school, and the expectations connected to each grade level and beyond. School leaders and the parent coordinator are highlighted as providing support to parents through mini-workshops, such as Common Core reading conducted by an assistant principal. “We have a really good parent coordinator” was a remark that resounded during the meeting with parents as they expressed how she provides endless caring and thoughtful support that ensures continuous communication with staff.

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

All teachers engage in professional learning communities using an inquiry approach that promotes distributed leadership structures and systematically analyze teacher practice and student data.

Impact

Effective teacher leadership results in school-wide instructional coherence, increased student achievement, and strengthened teacher capacity.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are an embedded system that organizes their work around the school's instructional focus anchored in Danielson's Framework for Teaching component 3d: Assessment of Learning. Several different configurations of teachers comprise teams across the school. Grade level teams analyze student work and other data, create and revise rubrics, curriculum units of study, performance tasks, and reflect on strengthening teaching strategies. Vertical teams are comprised of grade level teacher leaders, one team focusing on literacy, the other on math. For example, the vertical literacy team is responsible for revisions to unit plans using Ready Gen resources and Engage NY and based on identified student needs and trends. The data team is responsible for identifying student performance trends, meets with the vertical teams to share data and establish an open forum for conversations to take back to the grade level teams. This structure produces school-wide, instructional coherence and increased student achievement across grades as teachers develop a deeper sense of grade level student needs, as well as focusing their efforts on the grades below and above.
- Teachers identify the focus of each meeting captured on an agenda, minutes, and menus on a shared online template that can be viewed by all teams and school leaders. Grade level teams analyze student work/data, examine teacher practices, and diagnose changes and supports needed to improve student performance, develop plans for improvement of student performance, and review and/or adjust lesson plans during and after implementation. For example, while examining a formative math assessment, the grade 5 math team used the *Formative Assessment: Analyzing Grade Wide Data Protocol – Strengths and Gaps* to identify student strengths and common gaps solving math problems. The team decided on a list of strategies to incorporate into subsequent lessons, such as, connecting problems to real world, identifying what the math question “is asking me to do”, and chunking the word problem for students with disabilities who may have fluency issues.
- Core teacher leaders are identified by school leaders and play an integral role in attending off-site professional learning workshops devoted to unpacking the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. The key takeaways from these workshops are discussed in vertical teams and turn-keyed to all grade level teams. English as a second language teachers and NEST teachers are an integral part of this conversation by offering strategies that have been adopted by many teachers as needed. For example, teachers provide for ELLs, by planning content, as well as language objectives aligned to the five language objectives on the 2015 New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The vertical team shared that they are deepening their work by road mapping the success of students as they travel through the grades to provide even greater vertical coherence in revisions to Ready Gen.