



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Henry Gradstein

**Elementary School Q166
3309 35th Ave
Queens
NY 11106**

Principal: Jessica Geller

**Date of review: January 23, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Joseph O'Brien**

The School Context

The Henry Gradstein School is an elementary school with 1240 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 5% Black, 45% Hispanic, 18% White, and 31% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 12% 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 95.1%.

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	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

Across classrooms, teachers create assessments, rubrics, and have developed peer-editing checklists, that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. A/B

Impact

Data from aligned assessments provides teachers with information relative to student achievement resulting in adjustments to curricula and instructional decisions so that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrate increased mastery. Teachers provide students with actionable feedback impacting their achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The School now uses Scantron Performance Series assessments in reading and math to ensure objectivity and better assess student growth. Performance Series assessments are administered at least four times per year to measure student progress toward goals. Through the Instructional Cabinet, student data is shared with teacher teams and school leaders on an ongoing basis.
- Teacher teams and school leaders use and create assessments for all students including English language learners and students with disabilities. Students self-assess, keep track of their own progress using checklists, and provide feedback to their peers during peer-editing sessions.
- Teacher teams use student data to adapt curricula so that all students including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrate increased mastery. Teacher teams noted that students struggle with textual comparison and contrast. Teachers added additional supports including compare/contrast exercises, rubrics, visual aids, and an internet research component, to ensure students' learning needs were met.
- New York City Assessments indicate that students struggle with explaining their work in both math and English language arts. Teachers adjusted curricula to include additional supports including sentence starters, textual prompts to build vocabulary problem-solving exercises using meaningful situations such as splitting a gratuity at a restaurant, and building writing endurance among students through timed exercises.
- All rubrics and tasks are pre-approved by teacher leaders and school leadership to ensure rigor and alignment to standards. Teachers submit samples of students' written work with the rubric used for scoring. Administration and teacher leaders review the submission, discuss the assigned grade to norm practice and assess the rubric and task for rigor. Teachers are then provided with formative feedback.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices across the classrooms, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, follow the school's beliefs around how students learn best and students demonstrate higher order thinking in their work products.

Impact

All students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, have access to appropriately challenging tasks. Teacher questioning does not always lead to higher-order thinking and there are missed opportunities for student-to-student discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief that students learn best when working collaboratively in groups with teachers serving as facilitators of the learning was seen in four of seven classrooms.
- Teacher questioning was mixed with Webb's Depth of Knowledge level one, two and three questions heard in three of seven classrooms. Student-to-student discussions were seen in the majority of classrooms; however, discussions were not all rigorous and in three of seven classrooms required the retelling or recalling of facts rather than critical thinking evidenced by group discussions and collaborative activities. Questions include "What is an informative essay?", "What characteristics of another animal's skeleton would you want to have and why?" and "What are some variations of the word survive?"
- In seven of seven classes, high-quality English as a second language supports were used to assist English language learners in reading comprehension and math computation. Supports include colorful visual cues, graphic organizers, academic charts, graphs and posters were seen in seven of seven classrooms.
- In six of seven classes, all students including English language learners and students with disabilities worked on tiered tasks using unique resources. For example, in second grade English language arts, students in flexible groups worked on one of three essays with varying levels of supports including graphic organizers, visual cues, and sentence stems.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills for all students including English-language learners and students with disabilities. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that diversity of learners including English-language learners and students with disabilities have access to the curricula and tasks. .

Impact

The school ensures that curricula and academic tasks are rigorous, aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, accessible for English language learners and students with disabilities, and refined by teachers based on student assessment data.

Supporting Evidence

- School curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and teachers use Go Math, Pearson's Calle de Lectura for the Spanish dual language program, and have recently adopted ReadyGen curriculum for English language arts. In classrooms, students are asked to use textual evidence to support claims and counterclaims and describe their thinking when solving multistep word problems.
- School leaders purchase of the ReadyGEN supplement entitled the Scaffolded Strategies handbook provides staff with ability to embed express and extend strategies into the lessons that provide students with multiple entry points. Thus, as evidenced is six of seven classrooms, students were able to engage in tasks allowing for a deeper understanding of levels of meaning in a text, structure, language conventions and knowledge demands.
- Teacher teams have adapted curriculum maps to better align with New York City assessments and include more opportunities for on-demand writing in ReadyGEN and Calle de Lectura. Teachers revised unit maps to include more instruction in the use of textual evidence in writing. Teacher teams and school leaders created a unit-by-unit crosswalk between ReadyGEN and Calle de Lectura that provides dual language Spanish and English language arts teachers with skills, content, strategies, and resources, for both programs.
- English as a second language teachers (ESL) work with teacher teams to adjust maps to meet the needs of English-language learners. They create supports and entry points for English language learners including use of visual cues, graphic organizers and vocabulary assessments. English as a second language teachers model ESL strategies including use of clear speech, total physical response, and hand gestures in classrooms.
- Teacher teams adjusted math curriculum to include more time devoted to fractions based on student data garnered from classroom and New York City assessments.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently emphasize a culture of learning that communicates high expectations to teachers through written and verbal communiques, frequent class visits to celebrate effective teacher pedagogy, provide training, and have a system of accountability for meeting expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness through detailed written messaging and feedback, student assemblies, and successfully partner with parents to support student progress.

Impact

High expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability, collaboration, and buy-in on the part of teachers, leaders, and families, thus creating an atmosphere conducive to the developmental needs of all students. School leaders successively partner with families to support student independence, progress, and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Student handbooks set clear and rigorous expectations for students, and explain rules and regulations. The school also provides a monthly calendar noting key weekly dates for families.
- Evidenced throughout the community school leaders create high expectations for all staff, including pre- and post- observation conferences, professional learning opportunities, and teacher team meetings. For example, the principal writes a weekly newsletter to all staff. The newsletter notes key information including administrative notes policy updates, ongoing professional learning opportunities, and a section entitled, “Glad to be in the same school with...” This section highlights exemplary teacher practice and behavior.
- All students participate in two assemblies, prepare presentations to students about their fieldwork, and participate in minimum of two field trips aligned to the curriculum during the year. These initiatives enhance the educational experience for students and reflect a culture where all members of the school community participate.
- School leaders conduct “pop-ins” or short positive visits to classrooms each day. During a pop-in, school leaders provide a brief written commendation in an area of teacher practice or behavior. Several teachers collect their written pop-in commendations and hang them proudly in their classroom.
- School leaders have successfully partnered with families to create the Enrichment Committee; a group of parent volunteers who participate in after- school programs. Parents and administration work closely to plan and deliver meaningful experiences for students, across grades, in the arts.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry based structured professional collaborations led by instructional coaches and teacher leaders that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and curricular cohesion and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically use and design protocols to analyze assessment data and student work to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

Structured professional collaborations result in school wide instructional coherence, increased student achievement for all learners, and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teacher teamwork results in shared improvements in data-based instruction and curricular refinement.

Supporting Evidence

- The literacy coach provides ongoing support for teacher teams in use of ReadyGEN in English language arts, and a math coach provides Go Math! supports including side-by-side coaching, modeling, curricular adaptation, use of assessment, and looking at student work to adjust instruction. During teacher team meetings, literacy and math coaches work with classroom teachers to model and plan effective techniques for using multiple entry points. The coaches work as mentors, co-teachers, and instructional leaders to support the day-to-day instruction in the classrooms.
- The Professional Learning Team analyzes Advance data, reviews teacher requests, and designs professional learning sessions, held at least twice per month. School leaders and teachers volunteer to provide professional learning opportunities on Monday afternoons. Surveys are used to obtain feedback on how best to improve these professional learning opportunities.
- Teacher teams have daily common prep periods and use the time to adapt and align curriculum, review student work, and share assessments and tasks. For example, teams use the ORID (Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional) focused conversation data analysis protocol to identify what they see when looking at student data, what surprises them, what trends or big ideas are identified, and what are the team's next steps.
- Teacher teams identified that students with disabilities were struggling in multi-step word problems in math. After deeper analysis, teachers uncovered that students were only completing the first step in multistep problems. Teachers met to discuss strategies and made adjustments to curriculum to ensure student completion including underlining of text, use of manipulatives, use of more complex, State exam-style questions in daily classroom activities, and providing collaborative tasks so students work together to improve mastery.