



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Holliswood School

26Q178

**189-10 48 Radnor Road
Queens
NY 11423**

Principal: Jennifer Ambert

**Date of review: February 10, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Joseph O'Brien**

The School Context

The Holliswood School is an elementary/middle school with 525 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 8% Black, 14% Hispanic, 60% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 4% 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 95.0%.

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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently emphasize a culture of learning that communicates high expectations, provide training and have a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness 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

- The school communicates to parents in writing on a bi-monthly basis. Grade level teacher teams create a newsletter detailing what each grade will be working on in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies and includes important reminders and tips for families at home to support student progress. Virtue of the month notes are listed and explain key skills including self-regulation and its importance. The Parent Coordinator writes a bi-monthly parent newsletter noting important parent workshops, academic supports and key calendar dates. The Principal maintains the school's Official Facebook Page, Website, and Blog to keep parents/guardians updated. The PTA distributes a bi-monthly parent newsletter.
- The school's instructional focus is to improve student skills in using text based evidence to support logical inferences drawn from text and arguments made during classroom discussions. Advance data revealed that teachers struggled with evidence in argument and Danielson component 3b: Questioning and Discussion Techniques. The school has created a professional learning committee consisting of administrators and teachers to design and lead professional learning opportunities each Monday. Ongoing professional learning for teachers by teachers and school leaders in these areas and feedback via surveys occur at least once per week resulting in a culture of mutual accountability.
- The school provides families with monthly student goal sheets which detail progress in reading, writing, math, science and social studies. Additionally, families receive school-wide curriculum calendars detailing upcoming units of study for each subject and grade. Parents shared that workshops with guest speakers are well-attended. The workshops include topics such as fostering effective communication skills, anti-bullying strategies, iPads in the classroom, Yoga, understanding the Common Core Learning Standards, and the importance of literacy. Parent surveys are used to discern workshop success. Parent volunteers are also trained to assist in school activities including the fall festival, book fair and student-led parent conferences.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices consistently provide multiple entry points for all students including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Student work products and some student discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Students, including ELLs and students with disabilities are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products. However, multiple entry points are not yet strategically integrated and not all students are consistently demonstrating their thinking across all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in flexible groups worked on tiered activities with unique scaffolds and resources including graphic organizers in all classes visited. For example, in third grade English, students in one of three tiered groups researched a non-fiction article and cited evidence based on the text using unique graphic organizers based on student reading comprehension levels. However, multiple entry points are not yet strategically integrated and not all students were consistently demonstrating their thinking. For example, in a 12-1 math class, levels of student engagement were mixed during peer presentations on strategies to solve multistep word problems.
- In four of seven classrooms visited, student to student discussions were heard. For example, seventh grade students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, participated in one of four Socratic circles with unique student roles including facilitator, evaluator, recorder, and tracker, while generating high level questions related to the text. However, in three of seven classrooms equity of voice among students and teachers was mixed with some lost opportunities for non-volunteers to participate during class discussions and little wait time provided between questions, thus limiting student ownership of their learning.
- Higher-order thinking questions are beginning to be strategically included. Questions such as, “What are the parts of a story?” “What are some types of figurative language?” and “Is there another strategy we could have used to solve the problem?” were heard. However, Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DoK) level 3 or 4 questions were not yet consistently seen in the vast majority of classes.
- Across classrooms, student work products consistently reflected student thinking and participation including Glow/Grow Feedback on bulletin boards, and portfolios with detailed assessments and graded student work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks, and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's use of engaging and rigorous curricula for all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, results in coherent instruction, where students demonstrate their thinking across grades and subject areas while promoting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Go Math! and resources from Everyday Math for grades K-5 and CMP3 in grades 6-8. In English, teacher teams use ReadyGEN and Scholastic Code X to augment teacher designed English curriculum that is used across subjects and grades. Student reading levels are used to ensure curricular cohesion and student entry points across grades and subjects. For example, teachers create and annotate their units of study, with lesson plans that include pre-selected higher order guiding questions and reflect the standards, known as “I Can” statements/learning targets to push student thinking in activities including close reading, use of text based answers, text based vocabulary and shared reading to increase student comprehension and ownership of learning. Examples of I can statements include “I can determine the author’s purpose”, and “I can use text evidence to answer questions.”
- All grade teams have created vertically aligned curriculum maps in grades pre-K-8. Maps reflect grade level curricula, topics of study, specific units and skills, related essay topics and skills addressed, and end of unit assessments. The school-wide curriculum calendar notes units for all subject areas including physical education and arts/music and technology. Curriculum maps list a menu of complex texts with mini lesson skills, enduring understandings, content knowledge and numeracy strategies. For example, 7th grade English maps note an explanatory essay requiring students to compare and contrast authors’ techniques between two non-fiction passages as a key assessment for student mastery of 7th grade skills.
- The instructional shifts are strategically addressed in the curricula. Each grade level in K- 8 requires a “step” of growth on the “staircase” to prepare students for the complexity of college and career ready texts. Students read the central, grade appropriate text around which instruction is centered and student entry points are created in lesson plans and noted in maps. Adapted tasks and scaffolds for ELLs and students with disabilities were seen in activities including visual cues, total physical response, teacher-created graphic organizers and strategies to pre-teach vocabulary.
- ELLs and students with disabilities receive supports and scaffolds to support their thinking. Graphic organizers, picture cues, specific challenging vocabulary words and notes for flexible groupings were seen in lesson and unit plans. In a 12-1 MS classroom, a student led the math team talk with the class, where students challenged one another to self-correct by reviewing one student’s explanation of a solution to a math problem.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers design and use assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress towards goals across grades and subjects, track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

Impact

School assessments provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement across grades and subjects. The school strategically makes adjustments to meet all students' learning needs, including ELLs and students with disabilities to ensure there is a clear portrait of student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- School practice in developing Common Core aligned assessments, rubrics, checklists, protocols and grading policies are consistent and cohesive across grades and subjects. Rubrics and tasks are written in student friendly language that is easy to understand and color coded according to difficulty level. For example, the kindergarten teacher team created an end of unit progress tracking tool and literacy assessment system to monitor student literacy growth by noting reading levels, letter identification, sound identification, and sight word recognition. This practice has resulted in student progress in reading comprehension, vocabulary and English language acquisition.
- Teacher teams meet at least three times per week to revise unit maps and assessment and to discuss gaps in instruction between grades. Teacher teams meet at least once per week to look at student work and to gauge the effectiveness of reading, writing and math instruction. As a result, instruction and assessments are realigned on an ongoing basis to meet students' needs and promote student ownership of learning and growth. For example, teacher teams meet to discuss Item Skills Analysis and to identify ways to modify instruction to support students in identified areas of weakness. A review of data revealed that students were struggling with supporting claims and refuting counterclaims using textual evidence. Teacher teams created units of study which emphasized mini-lessons on counterclaim, designed additional graphic organizers to support the identification of textual evidence and provided counterargument sentence starters to augment the curriculum.
- The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals and adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers formally assess students using curricular pre and post assessments, New York City pre and post assessments, New York State exam item analyses, Unit Tasks and Writing Responses (K-3), Exit slips, Guided Reading and Writing Conference notes (pre-K-5), Common Core Learning Standards aligned English language arts and math benchmarks (Gr. 3-5) and Go Math Unit Exams (K-5).
- In first grade mathematics, there was an identified deficiency from the baseline data in the area of Operations and Algebraic Thinking: adding and subtracting facts to 20. In this area, 15% of student answers were correct. Instruction was adjusted by differentiating in small flexible groups and teaching different strategies to reinforce facts, such as using manipulatives (counters, cubes), draw a picture strategy, using the tens frame, math games via ThinkCentral online, use of iPad APPs and additional math games. By Chapter 4, there has been a 65% increase on the average in performance in this area as evidenced by the most recent Go Math assessment data.

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 that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promote the achievement of the school's goals and the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze assessment data and student work to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

Structured professional collaborations result in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Teacher teamwork results in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers serve on teacher teams devoted to inquiry and the analysis of data that lead to adaptations and refinement to curricula to foster improvements in instructional practice. Teams meet at least three times per week to engage in six week inquiry cycles, adapt curricular resources including tasks and rubrics, and engage in student data analysis. For example, student assessment data highlighted that 50% of struggling sixth grade students had trouble using and refuting counterclaims. Due to this data analysis, the English language arts and social studies teachers aligned their lesson plans to incorporate mini-lessons that focus on counterclaims in an argumentative essay, and supports student with counterargument sentence starters and outline templates/graphic organizers that compare claims & counterclaims. These practices have resulted in approximately 95% of students successfully writing an argumentative essay that includes a counterclaim and 80% of students successfully refuting counterclaims.
- Teacher teams create assessments, tasks, rubrics, protocols and curricular adaptations and extensions for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Teams share resources online via Google Drive.
- The Professional Development team is comprised of administration, coaches and teacher leaders and meets weekly to discuss professional learning opportunities for staff. Measure of Teaching Practice scores from Advance and data from teacher surveys are used to create individual teacher professional learning goals. Professional learning topics include Danielson Framework for Teaching, questioning and discussion techniques, providing purpose for reading, and teaching necessary background information. Teachers are provided with class coverages and other opportunities to intervisit formally and informally each month. Teachers record best practices, feedback and questions for the teacher on Structured Peer Visit logs.
- Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of instruction and note implications and revise curricula to better meet the needs of all students including those with disabilities and ELLs. For example, 5th grade teams noted that subgroups struggled with academic vocabulary. Teachers created vocabulary based activities including word of the week which require students to use the word three times during the class for mastery. Additionally, 4th grade teams noted students struggled with using infographics, so they revised curriculum to first allow students to master pre-requisite skills including citation of textual evidence in featured articles prior to working with charts and graphs.