Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ocean School

Elementary School Q197

825 Hicksville Road
Queens
NY 11691

Principal: Christina Villavicencio

Date of review: March 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton

The School Context

The Ocean School is an elementary school with 554 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 50% Black, 43% Hispanic, 4% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Focus**	**Developing**
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	**Additional Findings**	**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**	**Developing**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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
School leadership utilizes a variety of sources to communicate expectations to school staff through training and with staff, foster an understanding of high expectations to parents toward college and career readiness for students.

Impact
Systems for accountability ensure that staff members are aware of the school's expectations and ensure that ongoing feedback to parents helps them understand student progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- As an instructional leader, the principal communicates expectations around the instructional core and provides support for teachers to attain the stated expectations. For example, in order to provide support for teachers around the content of mathematics and the use of the GoMath program, the principal hired a consultant from GoMath to work with teachers on a consistent basis throughout this year to date. As a result of the training, teachers spoke of feeling more comfortable with teaching math and curricula modifications made to meet student needs.

- The principal has an expectation for the classroom environment including work being posted including reading responses, student writing, math problem solving, science writing, current events writing and writing around the virtue of the month which connects to the school's Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports or PBIS program. These work products were evident consistently throughout classrooms visited.

- The school provides parents with information on upcoming events, including information on the Common Core Learning Standards. A monthly newsletter is sent home to all parents as well as newsletters by grade around what students will learn for the upcoming month. A progress report goes home between report card cycles to apprise parents of their child's progress.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings
While the school is utilizing Common Core aligned resources, academic tasks emphasizing rigor and higher order thinking are inconsistent and modifications for student with disabilities and English language learners are not indicated. Some instructional shifts are not consistently integrated into curricula.

Impact
Curricula decisions have not yet yielded consistent student exposure to the instructional shifts as well as to regular opportunities to delve into engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- In reviewing curricula options, the school uses GoMath in grades kindergarten through grade 5. In visiting classrooms, there is an emphasis on students solving real world problems and in some classes and grades, an emphasis on supports around math language. However, in observing curricula artifacts as well as unit plans, there are some grades and classrooms where the teaching of math language is not indicated on plans and embedded in teacher practice. This omission does not enable students to fully grasp skills and strategies and to use them with confidence.

- The school is currently using Ready Gen as the basis for the English language arts program. Additionally, the school is currently incorporating elements of the Teachers College writing program into curricula. Students are encouraged to use text-based evidence in their writing, but consistent writing instruction around the writing process in the school is inconsistent at this time.

- In reviewing units of study for some grades and subjects, curricula and unit maps are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, but inconsistently provide entry points for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, in reviewing curriculum maps in grades 3 and 4 English language arts and grades 2, 3 and 4 in math, units outlined what students would be learning, but did not delineate any specific supports for students with disabilities and English language learners.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Although teachers are beginning to incorporate tasks and classroom discussions that require higher-order thinking, such tasks and discussions were uneven across classrooms. Teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
Work products and discussions across classrooms reflect uneven participation and demonstration of higher order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In a social studies class, students were engaged in a table discussion and were encouraged by the teacher to provide text evidence in their responses. Some students though were having difficulty being a part of the conversation and needed sentence starters or prompts to support them which were not in evidence in the classroom or on the table.

- In an English language arts class, despite students being placed in groups and discussing a text from Ready Gen, students did not have a specific task to follow and an expectation of a product at the end of the discussion time. Additionally, some students dominated the discussion and other did not have an opportunity to participate.

- In an English language arts class, students were grouped using data in literacy centers as well as for guided reading with the teacher. Some students were reading independently, but were not given a purpose for the reading or a way to respond to the reading. Another group was working on creating new words, but it was unclear what this activity was tied to and students were not given any kind of parameters or an organizer to note the words they created.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Although there are school-wide assessments, including rubrics, all related to the curricula, they are not always tied to curricula outcomes and to a school-wide grading policy. Practices to help students understand feedback based on going checks for understanding and self-assessment are inconsistent.

Impact
The use of assessments does not yet lead to actionable next steps school-wide so that all students know what they need to do to improve. Inconsistent checking for understanding during lessons precludes meeting all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- During the student meeting, some students were able to refer to writing rubrics and feedback given by their teacher. For example, one student stated that he needed to "incorporate more text evidence to support his answer and watch his punctuation". Another student said that he "needed to use language from the task to start his introduction." However, when another student was asked about how rubrics were used in his classroom, he responded by saying, "What is a rubric?" In reviewing the student work and feedback, students also had difficulty understanding rubric language and could not state what rubric language meant to them in terms of what they did well and what they need to work on moving forward. Additionally, one student had difficulty reading the teacher's handwriting. The principal stated that the school was working on creating child-friendly rubrics as well as student self-assessment in grades 3 through 5 so that students can articulate their next steps.

- The principal stated that teachers are using questioning to assess students whether in whole class or in groups. Teachers also use exit slips to assess students at the conclusion of lessons to plan for the next lesson. Teachers are also observing students and taking notes to utilize in conferences with students. During classroom visits, while some teachers moved from group to group to assess students and recorded results to be used in future lesson planning, other teachers did not pace lessons so that assessment could take place. In one Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom, one teacher was moving from group to group, but did not take any notes. In an English language arts classroom, the teachers asked questions very quickly of the students and rushed the questions and answers given. She also did not note student answers.

- While the principal has encouraged teachers to provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students, a review of work products in classrooms showed that most feedback was given on writing tasks. Feedback given in math was limited in some classrooms to "watch your multiplication" or "check your work".

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

Findings
Structured professional inquiry-based collaborations aligned to school goals offer opportunities for teachers' professional growth and input on instructional decisions.

Impact
Increased teacher capacity and decision making fosters stronger pedagogical practices, team building and teacher input into curricula decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly. Inquiry work around a particular focus takes place during a 4-6 week cycle. Teachers have developed structures for looking at student work, noting trends across the grade and recording the information on a school-wide template developed to refer to during the cycle. Modifications are then made to curricula, unit maps and lesson plans. The principal reported that with the support of a math consultant teachers were diving into looking at student work and trends in math problem solving and making adjustments based on their collaboration as a team.

- During a team meeting, teachers were in the midst of inquiry cycle regarding math and had administered a problem-solving assessment having used a problem from the Common Core library. Teachers discussed what kind of student thinking was evident in their responses. Students could show their work visually, but had trouble in crafting their thinking in writing using appropriate math language. One teacher suggested that a vocabulary station be created in a math center so that students who needed support in acquiring math language could receive it. Teachers also discussed implementing more modeling to show alternate paths of inquiry and to have students share their thinking along with using math language as they share. Teachers also agreed to make modifications to the problem of the day in the GoMath program so that students would need to write their thinking more often in addition to just representing it pictorially.

- School level coaches and assistant principals support teacher teams. Teachers spoke of the support received from school level staff as well as outside consultants and have been working on modifications to curricula and unit plans. One team is working on incorporating Teachers College writing units of study into the Ready Gen curricula where they have found gaps in writing instruction. The team will then work with other teams as the school moves forward with changes to the English language arts curricula.