



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 203 Oakland Gardens

Elementary 26Q203

**53-11 Springfield Gardens
Queens
NY, 11364**

Principal: Carole Nussbaum

**Date of review: December 17, 2014
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The School Context

P.S. 203 is an Elementary school with 897 students from grade PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 2.20% Black, 7.50% Hispanic, 17.20% White, and 71.30% Asian students. The student body includes 7.70% English language learners and 10.10% special education students. Boys account for 53.10% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46.90%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 97.10%.

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	Well Developed
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

The school establishes a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families through a variety of communication practices. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

The school has successfully partnered with families to support student progress connected to a path to college and career readiness. Students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school mantra, “every child is entitled to an enriched education” is embraced by all stakeholders and embedded in school decisions. In each stakeholder meeting, leadership, teacher teams, parents and students all referred to this mantra. Curricula decisions, arts offerings and partnerships at the school reflect this belief.
- Parents receive a monthly school newsletter and school letters. Teachers create a communication notebook that outlines the homework across a given week with space provided for parents and teachers to have on-going communication. For example, communication books reflect a range of formal questions and responses regarding specific assignments, following up on a child’s progress to more informal communications to confirm if a parent received a notice or if the teacher received a book order form. The School Leadership Team (SLT) has opted to meet weekly for increased opportunities for communication and collaboration.
- Parents and administration collaborated to create a debate program for students in grades 3-5. Parents feel their children are receiving a well-rounded elementary education that prepares them for middle school experiences in terms of academic rigor and public speaking.
- Through the use of rubrics and teacher and peer feedback and self- reflection systems, students are able to clearly articulate the skills, strategies and standards they are learning and what they need to do in order to improve their work products. This was evident in the student meeting where students in all grade levels were consistent in expectations that were communicated to them. Across grades, students referred to using on-going use of rubrics and reflection as a tool for learning.
- Staff members refer to the school-wide curriculum maps as a “living document” and resource that provides a normed understanding of the expectations at the grade level and next level.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teaching practices across the vast majority of classrooms reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, are aligned to the curricula and allow for multiple opportunities and entry points, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to engage in common core aligned activities. However, student work products in mathematics can be further extended to include the best practices employed in literacy.

Impact

Teaching practices are aligned through the team and school level discussions. Curricula and academic tasks are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief is that, "all children are entitled to an enriched education." Independent Investigation Method (IIM) is a research/project- based program, available to all students in all grades. Students speak explicitly about the research and projects they are doing in IIM.
- Differentiated tasks, rubrics and checklists are available at the beginning of each unit and students were observed referencing them in classroom visits. Further, students referred to this during the student meeting at which time they said, "We always know what is expected of us."
- In a self-contained classroom, students were engaged in the same literacy skills as the general education classes with appropriately leveled tests allowing children access into the curriculum. Strategic use of the paraprofessionals in the room allowed the classroom teacher to plan for small group, targeted instruction. Students in all three groups read fluently, identified story elements and shared opinions using text-based evidence to support their claims.
- Across classrooms, students were engaged in Socratic circles using "accountable talk" in literacy. Through the Independent Investigation Method process, all students demonstrate high levels of thinking with an emphasis on academic vocabulary and text evidence through multiple modalities such as song, Lego inventions, writing an almanac and creating a word search. In a mathematics class, students were using similar "talk stems" such as "I agree because..." and "I respectfully disagree because..."emphasizing and embracing all 8 mathematical practices.
- Student work products in literacy reflect a culture of curiosity and inquiry. Work products in mathematics are in the form of worksheets and end of unit assessments.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

As part of curricula design, teachers use consistent common core aligned assessments and scaffolded rubrics and checklists that offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teacher assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of on-going checks for understanding and student self-reflections.

Impact

Teachers and students receive meaningful feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs and students, across all grades, are keenly aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The Independent Investigative Method (IIM) contains rubrics for each of the seven steps of the process. Student projects lead to a presentation and peers provide evaluation and feedback on both presentation style and content.
- The fifth-grade teacher team developed a writing rubric synthesizing the various aspects of the schools literacy program and aligned to New York State standards and the New York City performance task rubric. Teachers use pre-assessment data to determine scaffold and extensions for all students.
- Teachers use conference notes, exit slips and student reflection. During classroom visits, we observed adjustments in purposeful groupings. Students are given pre- and post-assessments to determine the groups they are placed in and the support they will need to be successful in a given unit of study. Students spoke about the groups being flexible.
- During the student meeting, students shared their work across subjects detailing strengths and next steps referencing the rubrics and feedback provided by their teachers, peers and self-evaluation.

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

Teachers work successfully in team structures to share best practices, analyze student data and artifacts, develop tools to strategically measure student progression of the standards, make adjustments to the curriculum and plan for instruction.

Impact

Teacher collaboration has deeply built coherence within and across grades resulting in improvements in pedagogy and opportunities for continuous student growth. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are organized within grade level and vertically. Grade level teacher teams meet regularly (twice a week) to refine curriculum and plan tasks based on the collaborative analysis of student work in response to a common assignment. Team members assume rotating roles facilitating teacher leadership. The curriculum team is a vertical team comprised of teachers across all grade levels. Their primary mission is to elevate grade level issues to the school level in order to develop solutions. In iReady, teachers identified issues within geometry at the grade level; this was further realized at the school level. As a result they identified the need to incorporate manipulatives and a problem solving series that incorporated reading and writing about geometry to explain geometry concepts. There is a collaborative culture of professional learning and high levels of teacher trust.
- Classroom teachers analyzed a pre-assessment writing task from their common rubric, identified a skill gap, and created a resource (or scaffold) to address that gap. For example, students demonstrated varied abilities to paraphrase. Teachers created scaffolded resources to support students who were not paraphrasing at all and for students making weak to strong attempts. Teachers shared the resources at the team level and created a plan to try them and return to the next meeting prepared to analyze student progress based on the implementation of these scaffolds.
- Teachers and administration worked collaboratively to design a year-long professional development plan consisting of 10 professional learning communities (PLC's), based on teacher interest/need. After a year-long study in their respective PLC's, each team will present their findings following a school created protocol which emphasizes integration of creative arts aligned to the school's belief in not just how students learn best, but adults as well.
- Teachers identified a gap in the former writing program which they described as, "focused on literary response" and felt they needed a program which supported the writing process and closer aligned to their work in the Independent Investigative Model. As a result, the school adopted Benchmark Writing which prioritizes citing text evidence, grammar and self-reflection as an integral component.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Strategic curricula decisions made by school leaders and faculty have resulted in coherence and alignment to the Common Core State Standards and instructional shifts within and across grades and content areas. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

The school’s strategic curricula decisions and coherence promote college and career readiness for all learners. Academic tasks push student thinking across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- School staff has created a school-wide curriculum map, aligned to Common Core State Standards (CCSS), serves as the foundation for the development of creativity, critical thinking skills and the ability to problem solve as an essential skill. The school-wide curriculum map is an anchor which helps teachers synthesizes the variety of curriculum options provided at the school. For example, in literacy, the school has implemented the Independent Investigation method (IIM) as their core literacy program but supplements this with additional programs such as; Junior Great Books, Learning is Totally Enriched (LITE) Centers and Benchmark Writing.
- The curriculum committee, comprised of school leaders and faculty, regularly reflect on student progress and teacher pedagogy. School leaders facilitate connections to vendors and the team makes strategic decisions on what programs to bring to the school and eliminate based on student work products and data. Choices are implemented on a school-wide basis resulting in coherence across the school. For example, teachers noted a gap in student writing.
- The school has implemented “Morning Enrichment Centers.” Originally implemented to combat student lateness, teachers strategically plan the centers as a preview to an upcoming unit of study or to support a need based on student data. For example, one teacher has planned for one center to focus on the exposing students to decimals for the upcoming unit and another center to focus on fluency in literacy in response to recent data running record data.