



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**PS 251
Elementary School Q251**

**144-51 Arthur Street
Queens
NY 11413**

Principal: Edna A. Loncke

**Date of review: March 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Mitchell**

The School Context

PS 251 is an elementary school with 340 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 91% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 0% English language learners and 5% 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 95.2%.

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 | Proficient |
| 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 | Proficient |
| 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 | Proficient |

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments, rubrics and grading policies to track student progress across grades and subject areas.

Impact

The school's student data provides actionable feedback to both students and teachers and is used to make adjustments in curricula and daily instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes common assessments in all content areas including the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the New York City Performance Tasks, which reveal updated information on student performance and progress. These assessments provide feedback to students to guide their academic performance and feedback to teachers to help them adjust their instruction.
- Teachers are able to monitor student progress during academic intervention groupings, an after-school mentoring program and Saturday Academy through the systematic aggregation of data. This data is used to adjust student groupings, resources and instructional techniques. This data includes writing on demand, running records, unit assessments, selected quizzes and graded assignments. The teachers collect this data, store it in classroom folders and use it to modify individualized instruction.
- The school uses an interdisciplinary approach to literacy in which academic vocabulary is emphasized along with writing tasks. This is assessed through peer feedback checklists, student self-assessments and rubrics specific to the tasks. These provide feedback to students concerning their next steps and enable teachers to adjust their literacy lessons. For example, in a 3rd grade special education class, when students struggled with writing text-based analysis of an informational book, the teacher provided graphic organizers in subsequent lessons to assist with structure.
- The teachers use small group guided reading and strategy lessons as formative assessments of students including English language learners and students with disabilities. These assessments led to modifications of lesson plans using a lesson plan revision protocol and instructional adjustments such as re-teaching critical concepts.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Even though pedagogy provides consistent teaching practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts, teaching strategies are many and varied across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, teaching strategies support students in using multiple entry points into the curricular to demonstrate higher-order thinking in student work products. However, student engagement, including for student subgroups, is uneven.

Supporting Evidence

- In all classrooms visited, students responded to teacher-generated questions as they participated in class discussions. Students asked their own questions only during turn and talks with their partners and not in whole group discussions.
- Conversations with students indicated that they worked in partnerships and flexible groups depending on student ability. Extensions to the lessons did not always challenge the learners, including students with disabilities.
- The workshop structure has been modified by the inclusion of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide greater opportunities for active student engagement, discussion and problem solving. For example, student and teachers use interactive whiteboards to find video lessons, charts, graphs and manipulatives. These tools address the different learning styles of the students and allow for more varied teaching strategies.
- In a special education class, there were different entry points for each student in their reading groups. The paraprofessional and the teacher conferred with individual students and the accountable talk supported the discussion that fostered connections between their life experiences and the text.

Additional Findings

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Assigned tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills consistently across grades and subjects for all learners including students with disabilities.

Impact

The curricular decisions of the school build coherence while promoting college and career readiness for all learners. Curricula and academic tasks extend student thinking across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans in all content are adjusted with a unit revision protocol and indicate a variety of academic tasks with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all students. For example, ReadyGEN lesson plans now include graphic organizers for increased writing and supplementary leveled text.
- Reading, writing and content area units of study are now aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Curriculum consultants from Teaching Matters have been hired to plan strategies for vertical integration. For example, as the school adds grades 4 and 5, strategies will include multi-step problem solving, text-based persuasive writing and graphic organizers. Writing is considered to be a crucial skill for college and career readiness and is explicitly taught in small groups using conferring methodologies.
- Teacher lesson plans across content areas emphasize higher order thinking and the development and utilization of rigorous academic tasks. For example, a teacher development coach works with the 2nd grade teachers to infuse higher order thinking questions into their lessons on multiple 6 week cycles. The Network Achievement coach works with kindergarten, 1st and 3rd grades to develop rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders consistently message high expectations to staff using elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in multiple modes of communication. Workshops and progress reports keep families informed of student progress on a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

The school has structures and processes that support the school's high expectations and build accountability among the various constituencies. This provides a path for facilitating student progress towards the expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's "Handbook for Learning" is developed by the School Leadership Team and distributed to families at the start of the school year. The monthly newsletter explains the evolving high expectations and standards to students and families.
- Teachers receive ongoing professional developments in tenets of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, which is used to set high expectations for instruction and professionalism. School leadership conducts frequent classroom observations and provides individualized feedback to maintain accountability for continuous improvement. Ninety percent of the teachers receive a minimum of four observations a year. Ten percent receive a minimum of six observations. Feedback is provide first verbally and then in writing.
- The parent coordinator provides detailed training and workshops for parents connected to the Common Core Learning Standards and the clear next steps to college and career readiness. Students have career goals in the early grades and these are reinforced during career day.
- Parents explained that the teachers and faculty provide guidance on their children's progress through report cards, progress reports, school website, phone and email communication. Across grades, parents engage in home-school projects that demonstrate rigor and that require effort. Monthly workshops explain strategies to parents that enable them to better support their children's literacy and numeracy at home.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in examining data and student work within inquiry-based teams. The school principal builds leadership structures that facilitate teacher input on key decisions that affect learning.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved teacher practice and student achievement. Distributed leadership has expanded teacher and student capacity for learning and growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher leaders, who represent each grade, make instructional decisions for the grade and write memos communicating those decisions to their peers. They check in with the principal weekly to discuss essential professional development.
- Teachers explained that they were empowered to lead professional development teams and develop content by consensus. The major foci for this year are academic vocabulary, higher order questioning and rigorous discussion. For example, teachers videotape their lessons in order to share their practice with their peers for critical analysis and constructive feedback on their instructional techniques. In one instance, a 3rd grade teacher brought a videotape of her lesson to a Monday professional development session where her colleagues provided feedback on her questioning and discussion practices. This teacher was then able to better intersperse higher-order thinking questions with comprehension questions.
- Teacher teams review the results from unit assessments, DRAs and benchmark assessments as well as student work to make instructional decisions and share ideas for pedagogical improvement. One instructional decision was to increase the emphasis on students explaining their thinking through writing. For example, during a 3rd grade team meeting teachers discussed the use of common language during writing lessons by teachers across grades. The common language is taken directly from the Danielson rubric to describe high impact teaching behaviors that improve learning.