



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Public School 253

Elementary School Q253

**1307 Central Avenue
Queens
NY 11691**

Principal: Phoebe Grant Robinson

**Date of review: November 20, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton**

The School Context

P.S. 253 is an elementary school with 530 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 37% Black, 56% Hispanic, 3% White, 2% Asian and 2% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 10% 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 92.6%.

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	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	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Furthermore, school leaders and staff consistently communicate to both students and families high expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness and provide families with information relative to their children's academic performance and progress.

Impact

Staff are fully aware of school wide instructional expectations and are held accountable through training and ongoing feedback. As a result of the school providing families with information relative to their children's progress, they fully understand students' learning needs and curricular expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents reported that they receive information in English and Spanish via monthly newsletters from teachers, the monthly principal's newsletter, the school web site, a weekly phone call with a message from the principal that is recorded and is provided on the weekend with expectations for the coming week. This information, in various forms, allows parents to be aware of what their children are learning in school along with helpful ways to support their child at home. The principal hosts a Tuesday *Tea and Talk* on the second Tuesday of the month for parents, to enable them to hear the school's expectations and to address concerns about their child's education. Workshops around the Common Core Learning Standards and academics are provided to parents as well. Teachers meet with parents and students to discuss individual student goals and their progress, as well as student reading levels. As one parent stated, "we are always kept in the loop."
- The principal stated that she expects teachers to work collaboratively to set goals for targeted students based on data. These goals are a part of a student intervention plan that is reviewed every six weeks by teachers and administrators, revised as needed, to ensure that students are provided with the supports that they need. Teachers are expected to meet with students at least twice a month to discuss the progress towards their goals along with next steps. Through starting this work at the start of this school year, students who required Response to Intervention services (RTI) were provided with services a month earlier this school year.
- Teacher support is highly individualized. The principal meets with teachers following observations and engages in conversation around whether the support provided previously is working and discussion takes place using the Danielson Framework for Teaching rubric as the grounding for the discussion. Professional learning is designed looking at trends in practice and followed up on in subsequent observations with supervisors looking for the implementation of the feedback given.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Pedagogy is working towards a common philosophy of how students learn best in alignment with the instructional shifts. Teacher questioning, student discussions, and the use of multiple entry points and extensions, vary across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, varying teaching strategies have led to some missed opportunities for meaningful discussions, curricula extensions and supports to produce high level work products for all learners, including the school's sub groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school presented evidence to support that there is much work being done around supporting students at their entry points as well as incorporating the instructional shifts. In many classrooms visited, the execution of these plans was not in evidence consistently. For example, in one fifth grade math class students were given one problem to solve. In observing students, it was evident that some students were finished and had discussed their work, but were not given any additional problems to solve. However, in a second grade ELA class, systems were in place where students had colored cards in red, yellow and green to indicate to the teacher if they were in need of help or were confident in their work. It is evident that teachers focus on students citing text evidence in their discussion and writing which was viewed in a fourth grade classroom involved in a lesson using three texts on frogs. However, there was a lack of a school-wide focus on the use of academic language and supports around academic language in all content areas, which is particularly necessary for the school's high percentage of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.
- In most classrooms visited, teachers dominated whole class discussions with students asking few questions. A few classroom teachers had students "turn and talk" with teachers assessing the students' discussion. However, in the majority of classrooms visited, students had limited opportunities to share their thinking with classmates which limited their extension of learning, with teachers selecting students using Popsicle sticks in some cases. Students did not have the opportunity to call on classmates to extend discussions in several classrooms.
- There is a school-wide emphasis to use data to group students for lessons and to track student progress. Teachers commonly group students for guided reading instruction, for example, using data from previous lessons which was viewed in classrooms visited. However, in some classrooms, teachers were working with whole classes with no grouping taking place. For example, in one special education bridge classroom, students worked with teachers and paras as a whole class, with no grouping taking place during the visit.

Additional Findings

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

Findings

School leaders and teachers adopt and adapt curricula that align to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills with supports provided to students so that they are met at their entry points.

Impact

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

Supporting Evidence

- All unit plans developed by teachers, across subject areas, reflect essential questions, academic language, content and skills, pre, mid and post assessments and a lesson-by-lesson calendar. Text dependent questions and activities are highlighted for use in all subject areas as a way to focus on the instructional shifts. Instructional shifts are incorporated in unit and lesson plans developed in grade level teams. Students across the school are encouraged to incorporate text evidence in their writing and discussion. Additionally, students are expected to explain their mathematical thinking when problem solving.
- All students are engaged in the Ready Gen reading and Go Math programs with supports and scaffolds, such as differentiated reading and writing activities, which are incorporated for students with disabilities and ELLs. The school's science curricula is designed and refined using the New York City Department of Education's Common Core library, which also incorporates supports, like differentiated text around the same topic studied and chunking important text for the school's diverse learners.
- Academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and show appropriately rigorous demands such as students solving math word problems, students explaining their thinking, as well as students justifying their thinking through showing text evidence in their writing. The school adopted a school-wide mantra called RICE which stands for Read, Infer, Cite, and Evidence. Students are encouraged to read text closely, make inferences about the text, write using the source using at least two details and cite textual evidence. Students spoke to this expectation at the student meeting.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Throughout the school, teachers use common assessments and rubrics, aligned to the school's curricula in order to track student progress.

Impact

The school has structures in place to analyze assessment data and monitor progress so that teachers provide students with feedback and make curricula and instructional adjustments to meet students' academic needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers maintain student portfolios with progress on each unit assessments from Go Math and Ready Gen. A cover sheet shows progress, grades and various assessment results such as Fountas and Pinnell running reading records and unit performance tasks. Teachers use this information to inform each student's intervention plan which is reviewed every six weeks and revised, as needed. The principal reported with this approach utilized the school's Response to Intervention (RTI) program was started a month earlier than last school year.
- All student performance tasks have rubrics and feedback that students can speak to along with their next steps. Rubrics are developed by teacher teams and are specific to grade level assessments. Teachers hold conferences with students where they provide targeted feedback and next steps to students. Students reported that they self and peer assess and this information is used to modify student goals which students spoke to in the student meeting. Furthermore, student self-assessment and peer feedback was evident in student worked that was reviewed.
- The principal meets with each teacher for "Teacher Data Chats". Through this process, each student is examined and teachers are expected to speak to student data they are tracking from unit assessments in Ready Gen and Go Math, Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments and the supports being provided based on data results. Each student's intervention plan is updated to reflect next steps in supporting the student to make progress or additional progress.

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

Findings

Teachers collaboratively look at student work and use the information from the trends to plan and adjust curricula. Teachers also have leadership opportunities and voice in student learning.

Impact

Teacher team work has resulted in improved instructional supports and student progress on unit tasks. Student learning has been positively affected by shared leadership practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams, who meet by grade levels, use a teacher developed practice protocol tool on looking at teacher practice to share and show practices at each meeting. A lead teacher who is a member of the instructional cabinet facilitates these meetings. Teachers spoke to having opportunities to learn from each other at the team meetings and taking the information learned and incorporating it in their instructional repertoire, which has resulted in improved practices, as measured in the Advance teacher evaluation system.
- Teams spend time looking at student work and make adjustments to curricula. At a second grade team meeting, teachers looked at student writing around a previously assigned piece on how students can show good citizenship in their community. One teacher shared the writing produced from her students, while the other teachers discussed trends noticed and made adjustments for an upcoming lesson. Adjustments included more explicit modeling of writing for students, as well as modeling the use of transition words.
- In meeting with a vertical team, teachers spoke to the opportunities they have to be leaders in the school such as serving as leads on grade level teams and serving on the school cabinet with school administrators. Teachers also are encouraged and have a voice in decision-making around curricula and resources used as well as to create templates and documents. Teachers created the student portfolio tracking document used in the school as well as the protocol used for teacher teams.