

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. Q256

Elementary-Middle-High School Q256

**525 Convent Road
Syosset
NY 11791**

Principal: Robert Lopez

**Dates of review: May 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Kathleen LeFevre**

The School Context

P.S. Q256 is a PK-12 all grades school with 480 students from PK through grade 12. The school population comprises 46% Black, 34% Hispanic, 16% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 69% special education students. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 84.6%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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.	Celebration	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.	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.	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Curricula decisions strategically made by school leaders and staff have resulted in the integration of the instructional shifts and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. Embedded and consistent cognitive engagement and higher order thinking skills are evident across all grades and subjects areas.

Impact

Across grades and content, the school coherently integrates the instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards with rigorous and challenging tasks, and real-world experiences resulting in instructional coherence and improved learning for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers reported that they work as teams to develop and revise pacing calendars and curriculum units. Unit plans include essential questions, standards addressed, targeted vocabulary, as appropriate adapted stories, and the flow of the lessons. A review of documents shows that maps and plans, and as needed revision plans, are available for the 2014-2015 school year across all content areas, resulting in curricular coherence.
- Curriculum teams for both standardized and alternate assessment use the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts to develop aligned curricula maps and units of study with multiple entry points across all content areas. Teachers create adapted books to ensure access by all students to the different units of study, resulting in increased participation in class.
- School leaders spoke about the rigor of tasks in the curriculum that is implemented with the students in standardized assessment, including units from EngageNY in mathematics and English Language Arts. The impact of the coherent curriculum aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards has been that forty-one percent (41%) of the students taking Regents in June 2014, August 2014 and January 2015 have passed the exams in the different content areas.
- As articulated by school leaders and teachers, curricular initiatives have emphasized increased opportunities in their rigorous course offerings based on student interest, resulting in increased student participation in classes and in skills acquisition across contents. For example, the school implemented electives in financial literacy and entrepreneurship; students studied item analysis, product creation, marketing, selling and creating and were provided with funds to generate businesses. The school has implemented a Mouse Squad that teaches students skills and training to operate a school-based help desk, and they learn skills that include technology repair, gaming design, coding and renewable energy. As a result of learning these skills, students have skillfully used a 3D printer to design and develop adaptive devices for fellow students with disabilities.
- The school emphasizes the instructional shift of academic vocabulary. A review of curriculum documents shows targeted vocabulary for each unit. Lesson plans include strategies for teaching vocabulary, and across classrooms, wall charts emphasize vocabulary development across content areas. The impact of the focus on vocabulary has been improvement in the complexity of texts students were able to read, as evidenced by an average increase of two reading levels for each student on the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Running Records.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While pedagogy, anchored in common beliefs aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, provides instructional supports, the use of consistent strategies that foster higher order thinking demonstrated in rigorous student work and discussions varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, multiple entry points support student engagement in rigorous tasks and discussions, yet there are some missed opportunities for all learners to demonstrate critical and analytical thinking and high levels of participation.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders report that at the end of 2013-2014, they reviewed the results of Advance and determined the importance of emphasizing teacher questioning and peer-to-peer discussion. Across all classrooms observed, there was evidence of students being asked whether they agreed or disagreed with what another student had said. Students in alternate classes were provided with visual cues to have them indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with other students. In some classes, some students were not encouraged to explain why they neither agreed or disagreed nor were they provided with enough wait time, thereby missing opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking.
- The school has structured opportunities to build student skills aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards speaking and listening standards and argumentative writing through the use of the Socratic Smackdown, a discussion-based humanities game to practice argumentation around an identified text or topic. As observed in a class lesson on how statistics on poverty rates can teach us a lesson about gratitude, students demonstrated that they could effectively use discussion strategies, such as agree, disagree, use evidence from the text, connect with another person's statement and play devil's advocate. Students received points for using the strategies, however students were not made aware at the time of what points they received, thereby diminishing opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning.
- The school promotes independence for all students and to that end students in alternate assessment use components of TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children), structured teaching that promotes generalization and independence of students with autism. As observed, clearly defined physical boundaries, individualized schedules, work stations and visual structures and supports are consistent across classrooms, resulting in environments that promote student readiness to learn. Across the majority of classrooms, students demonstrated the use of visual schedules and routines for independent, differentiated work at their stations. In some classes, the paraprofessionals were directed to tasks other than the whole group lesson while some students struggled with attending to whole group activities, resulting in missed opportunities to redirect students to learning activities.
- Across classrooms for students in alternate assessment, teachers used high-quality scaffolds and real-life objects to provide multiple entry points for students in learning concepts connected to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, to identify a central theme and identify supporting ideas, the teacher used three objects, asking students to identify one word that related to the three objects. In some classes, sufficient time was limited for students to practice concepts learned, resulting in uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking in their student work products.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Common assessments and ongoing data collection are used to track students' progress and to make curricular and instructional adjustments at the team and classroom level.

Impact

As a result of teachers' using data from common assessments and checks for understanding, teachers are able to make curricular and instructional adjustments that meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a range of common assessments, including Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI), Scantron Ed Performance Series, Read 180 growth reports and Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Running Records and Work Sampling System, to assist them in improving student outcomes. Teachers use pre- and post-assessments that are aligned to the curricula in use with different groups of students and use students' results on state assessments to determine skills that need to be targeted for different subgroups of students. Additionally, teachers use the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) to assess the social-emotional competencies of the students with a focus on Social Awareness and Self Management.
- Across classrooms and content areas, teachers use exit slips and questioning to check for student understanding. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared that they reviewed the exit slips to determine what students needed additional support and how they needed to adjust the lesson plan to ensure that all students had access to the curricula.
- Grading policies are available for all classes in the school. For example, in the high school classes, the teachers provide students with a syllabus that includes a breakdown of the grading policy for that specific course, including the number of weighted points for the different requirements, for example, vocabulary, class participation, writer's notebook, and essays. Students stated that they were able to use the grading policy to help themselves figure out how they were doing in the different classes.
- During the student meeting, the students were able to articulate their levels of reading, the levels of their student work across content areas and what they needed to do to improve their work. When presenting their work, several students chose to show work that represented the progress they made since the beginning of the year. Students spoke about what they had done from piece to piece of student work to improve their overall scores and ratings on the rubric.

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all school constituents, students and their families and provide systems and supports that promote college and career readiness for students.

Impact

As a result of consistent articulation of high expectations, all stakeholders share accountability linked to supporting student achievement in understanding and meeting those expectations

Supporting Evidence

- The school provides teachers with a checklist of classroom and professional practices, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and has teachers bring to their initial planning conferences a signed copy of these expectations. These expectations for initial conferences include a self assessment using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. During orientation at the beginning of the school year, teachers receive a manual compiled by the school, "Resources and Reference guides to take on your journey for Teacher Effectiveness." Topics addressed include assessment rubrics; growing, integrating and assessing word walls; characteristics of a highly effective learning environment, and wait time/think time, resulting in a shared understanding of expectations connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- As reported in the parent interviews, parents shared that the school is in constant communication with them, providing information about their children through communication notebooks, progress reports, notes that are followed by second and third notices, and phone calls. As stated by the parents, the school's consistent communication practices make them feel valued as an "authentic partner" in their child's learning. Parents also reported that the school has been effective in communicating with them about outside opportunities that help them support the "whole child" and foster the sense of their child's belonging in the community. Teachers are provided time in their schedule to regularly provide feedback to parents about their children. Their communications with parents are documented within Parent Engagement Logs and are collected and reviewed monthly, resulting in increased consistency of parent contact and support.
- Shared accountability for student success in meeting high expectations is evidenced by school leaders' and teachers' collaborative monitoring of the progress of students to determine whether they are ready to transition to the less restrictive environments. During the 2014-2015 fifteen (15) students successfully transitioned to Less Restrictive Environments (LREs), and another fifteen (15) students have been identified for LRE during the 2015-2016 school year. Parents reported that even though they would like to have their children remain at the school, school leaders are clear about expectations that are appropriate goals for their children including transitioning to less restrictive settings.
- During the student meeting, students shared that they are provided with rubrics for their work prior to engaging in the task and that frequently the teacher reviews the rubric with them prior to their beginning classwork. Students were able to talk about their work and use the rubrics to point out an area of growth they had made in the different content areas. One student shared that because of the rubric and feedback he received, he realized that using a unique approach to solve problems was recognized as a positive skill, allowing him to take risks in engaging in new and unfamiliar work and to be prepared for college.

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are involved in consistently analyzing student work, assessment data, instructional practices and curricula within structured professional collaborations. Established leadership structures and a culture of shared accountability are in place at the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved teacher pedagogy and increased student achievement. Distributed leadership structures have afforded teachers opportunities to build leadership capacity and share in decision-making processes relevant to student learning and achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that designate assigned roles and use protocols thereby increasing the effectiveness of the meeting time and the sharing of best practices for work with individual students or targeted subgroups. For example, a review of teacher meeting documents included a "Looking Collaboratively at Student Work Documenter Form" which delineated the roles assigned, the focus question, a note taking structure for descriptions, interpretations and implications, reflections, as well as a facilitator cheat sheet. Teachers rotate roles as presenting educator, facilitator and documenter, sharing in the accountability of the team process.
- During an observed Early Childhood Teacher Team Meeting, teachers began with a description of a student work focusing on two students from subgroups identified as a result of performance on the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI). Teachers engaged in a discussion about the student performance using the frameworks of the Work Sampling System, a curriculum-embedded, authentic performance assessment for teachers to use to assess young students' development in multiple domains. As stated by a member of that teacher team, the use of the Work Sampling System awakened her to all the aspects of student development that can be captured through observations. Teachers also discussed that while the system has allowed them to note student development across domains, the rubric is not broken down enough to showcase developmental nuances for many of the students with the most severe challenges; however, teachers were able to give examples of small increments of development and to suggest strategies to each other to implement. Teachers expressed that as a result of their collaborative teamwork, they observed progress in their own planning of lessons and in student progress in meeting goals across the domains of the Work Sampling System.
- At teacher interviews, teachers reported that teacher team inquiry work has been directed toward increasing the rigor of questioning skills and how to support the non-verbal students in questioning. Teachers articulated that they share best practices connected to areas of focus, including communication and questioning, identified by analysis of student data. As a result of inquiry work, supported by professional development on questioning, teachers encourage communication and questioning by having students respond to questions of whether they agree or disagree and why.
- During teacher meetings, teachers articulated that they consistently analyze data which includes results on standardized assessments and student work products, identifying trends across classes and needed refinements of the curriculum maps. Teachers expressed that they are able to provide school leaders with suggestions for revisions and that they have had a voice in the decision-making progress related to student learning.