



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The 30th Avenue School

Elementary-Middle School Q300

**28-37 29th Street
Queens
NY 11102**

Principal: Matthew Willard

**Date of review: April 1, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Philip A. Composto**

The School Context

The 30th Avenue School is a city-wide gifted and talented school with 115 students in its first year of operation with grades kindergarten, first and sixth. The school population comprises 6% Black, 5% Hispanic, 31% White, and 43% Asian and 12% other students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 3% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 is currently 96.6%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	Developing
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The principal communicates high expectations to the entire staff, including teachers, students and parents that have led to a culture of mutual accountability for these expectations. The school fosters positive partnerships with families and engages them in supporting their child's progress.

Impact

Teachers communicate clear and focused expectations and feedback to students that supports them in their learning. The principal and teachers provide frequent communication to families that enhance their understanding of the high expectations so that they actively support their children in taking ownership of their own learning. There is a holistic approach in supporting students that serves to address their physical, social, emotional, and academic learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers send home alerts for areas regarding physical, social, emotional or academic concerns. For example, a first grade parent stated, "A narrative report is sent home that informs us of areas our child needs to develop. This allows us to discuss it with her and assist her in addressing the areas of concern and building a plan to do it."
- The principal, social worker and teachers send home newsletters containing information about the school's philosophy about how students learn best, along with information about the Common Core Learning Standards, classroom activities/ tasks and special events. In addition, once each month, classroom teachers send home information about the unit of study and major activities/projects that students will be working on for that month.
- Families have access to the school's website and an on-line grading system, called Jupiter Grades. Jupiter Grades makes grading transparent to students, parents and teachers. A parent stated, "We can see our child's assignments and grades. It allows us to see their progress and if they are doing their work."
- The school social worker and grade six teachers meet weekly to plan advisory sessions that are responsive to the needs of pre-teens, embed college and career readiness skills and support service learning. For example, the advisory team met to plan a social action project and the associated lessons regarding research, advocacy and outreach. In one advisory, students examined animal welfare. Students researched and ultimately decided as a group to build a relationship with a "no-kill" shelter. Students planned, organized, marketed and hosted the event. As a result, students received five adoption applications and received \$200 in donations for the shelter.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Assessments and rubrics are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the school's curricula across classrooms. However, teachers' assessment practices are inconsistent across classrooms in the use of on-going check for understanding and effective adjustments within lessons.

Impact

The use of assessments and rubrics, along with next steps on student's written work, provide actionable feedback to students. However, only some classrooms visited reflected the use of ongoing checks for understanding and/or self/peer assessments thus limiting effective adjustments to meet all students learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, rubrics are used to assist students in self and peer assessment. For example, one student stated, "We submit all writing relating to projects in a drop box and classmates provide comments to each other based on the criteria in the rubric. One of my classmates stated that I should be specific with some details about how the government can do more. I then added to that the paragraph on government that they should save bees by trying to keep the bees healthy by adding more protein to their diet."
- In each content area, there are common baseline, unit and benchmark assessments that align to the curriculum and the common core standards. Although these assessments are used to monitor student progress, formative assessment practices are inconsistent across the school. In three out of six classrooms visited, there was no evidence that the teachers strategically provide checks for understanding, resulting in missed opportunities to further support students within their zone of proximal development.
- In two out of six classrooms, teachers collected and effectively used data from the "checks for understanding" to adjust their curriculum and/or instructional practices. In these two classrooms, the teachers strategically circulated to students as they worked and listened to student discussions. After listening and observing the work of the students, the teachers posed facilitative questions based on student/group needs. For example, one teacher asked, "How can you be sure your measurement is accurate?" The teacher then told students, "Discuss and I will come back to you." In another group the teacher asked, "Do you think everyone will have the same measurement?" This practice was not observed across most classrooms visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school curricula offer students opportunities to engage in rigorous academic tasks that produce meaningful work products. Teachers worked collaboratively to refine the curricula and academic tasks to incorporate the instructional shifts and ensure alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

The instructional shifts are embedded into curricula and tasks that ensure coherence and rigor across grades and subjects. Rigorous tasks are refined to provide access for all learners allowing, all students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills as they work to solve essential questions connected to the real world.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum is adapted from a shared belief of that students should be actively engaged in inquiry learning. All unit and lesson plans include opportunities for students to engage with peer discussion, complex texts/tasks and reflection on learning. For example, in the first grade science curriculum, units of study are built on the “inquiry model” that uses students’ natural curiosity and questions to guide them. In the Matter unit, guiding questions include, “How do liquids behave when they are moved and how do they behave in a container?” “What happens when different solids are mixed with water?” and “How can a mixture of water and solids be separated?”
- In grade six, the school uses the Connected Mathematics 3 (CMP 3) program, supplemented by teacher-created mathematics investigations. The teachers evaluated the CMP 3 program against the common core standards, and recognized deficiencies in the program. As a result, they collaboratively worked together to supplement the CMP3 program by creating additional mathematics investigation tasks.
- In kindergarten and first grade mathematics, TERC *Investigations in Number, Data and Space* is used. This curriculum was selected after the principal and teachers visited more than ten high performing schools in mathematics and found this curriculum to be common core aligned, incorporated the instructional shifts and aligned with the school’s core values. In science, teachers developed units and lessons, utilizing FOSS kits. In social studies, teachers created iLearn units and lessons aligned to the newly released New York City Social Studies Scope and Sequence.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The principal has leveraged the school's core values and the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching that has established a unified and coherent belief around quality instruction. Teaching strategies across classrooms provide multiple entry points into the curriculum.

Impact

Across most classrooms, teaching practices reflect the schools' sets of belief and support all learners with challenging tasks. Most students are able to engage in solving real-world tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The school community believe students learn best when they are motivated and challenged by authentic intellectual purposes with clear and transparent expectations. This includes opportunities for students to self/peer assess and make modifications to their work based on the feedback received. For example, in one mathematics classroom, students engaged in a discussion and provided feedback to one another about the strategies they would use to solve three word problems. Students had to reflect and indicate if their thinking changed and explain how and why.
- In most classrooms, this was evident in the cognitive engagement of students working to solve focus questions that encompass the overarching essential question. For example, during a first grade mathematics lesson students used questions. "How can you be sure your measurement is accurate?" "How can different units affect your answer?" "How can you be sure others understand the measurement you used?" to guide their independent/group learning.
- In most classrooms, students were grouped based on student data. For example, in a sixth grade math class, students worked on three different levels of word problems. Students were grouped homogeneously. One group was guided by the co-teacher using manipulatives. Another group worked independently while the teacher facilitates using guiding questions. The last group worked independently with the teacher monitoring progress periodically. However, in a few classrooms, instructional practices and learning tasks were not always differentiated to maximize the needs of all students.

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

Teacher teams meet on a regular basis and have a clear student-centered instructional focus that is supported by professional structures and protocols. Teacher teams work collaboratively to look at student work, assessment data and analyze teacher practice and curricular materials to make informed adjustments to curricula.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations around units of study across grades and subjects strengthen instruction and builds coherence across the school. Teachers’ analysis and use of data to inform curricula and instructional practices results in increased student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers discussed how they actively work together and seek each other’s input on matters pertaining to curriculum and instruction. At the end of each writing unit, grade-level teachers meet during their three common preparation periods to review on-demand writing pieces. Using the Teachers College writing rubric, the team analyzes student work to determine student understandings and challenges from the previous unit and use this information to make adaptations to the next unit. For example, after implementing a realistic fiction unit, first grade teachers observed that students struggled to use realistic details and settings while writing narratives. Using Google Drive, the teacher team revised the unit plan to add lessons that focused on how to recognize the difference between realistic fantasy writing. In addition, the team changed the mentor text since the one being used included unrealistic characters.
- Teachers provide supportive feedback and possible intervention strategies to their peers. For example, one teacher presented the data on three students and provided samples of their writing. The teacher stated the supports provided, such as graphic organizers and modifications to text. Colleagues discussed and provided recommendations. For one student, it was recommended that the teacher try to scaffold the task and break it into smaller segments, such as having the student only work on the development of one character in one paragraph with emphasis on the use of descriptive language.
- Teacher teams have collaboratively developed rubrics and checklists to assess student work. In addition, teachers have developed toolkits that students can use for reading, writing and mathematics. For example, the sixth grade teachers developed a common argument rubric that is used to assess non-fiction argument writing across the curriculum.