



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Learners and Leaders

**Elementary School Q305
378 Seneca Avenue
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Lynn Botfeld

**Date of review: March 17, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

The School Context

The Learner and Leaders School is an elementary school with 389 students from grade Pre-kindergarten through grade three. The school population comprises 2% Black, 81% Hispanic, 11% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.2%.

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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teachers consistently engage in structured professional collaborations in teams using an inquiry approach that has resulted in shared leadership and improved student learning outcomes.

Teacher capacity has been strengthened as a result of the work and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Impact

School wide assessment practices are aligned to the curricula, modified as needed, and have resulted in significant student improvement on benchmark and formative assessments administered across subject areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams effectively implement systems to monitor a variety of student data and classroom practices that inform instruction leading to the achievement of goals for individual, as well as, groups of students. For example, during the 3rd grade team meeting, teacher were engaged in reviewing student work based on the analysis of writing trends by teacher using different types of methods for student writing in notebooks and on their animal inspired essays. Teachers also used previous data to discuss adjustment of classroom strategies and the improvement of writing based on changes to instructional practices.
- Teacher teams provide a data-based rationale and analysis of student work that inform their decisions to adjust teacher practice and create strategic activities for individual and groups of students. Teams meet both horizontally and vertically to monitor student progress in relation to the standards based on both formative and summative assessment sources and collaborate with administration to adjust scheduling to support this work.
- Administration and teachers have built a culture of professional collaboration in which they share insights, best practices about how students learn best fostering improvement and progress for all learners. For example, during the teacher team meeting, teachers shared the work of the linguistics phonics team, which has been conducting research about various philosophies and changing the school's approach to teaching phonics and phonemic awareness for students. The work of this team has impacted classes across the school. The vast majority of teachers collaborate in professional teams where they develop and implement school wide instructional practices, embedding the Common Core State Standards and instructional shifts to continuously promote improved achievement for all learners. During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared that as a result of their collaboration to focus on improving student writing products, they noticed huge gains from the pre and post writing assessments using writing stations.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by Danielson Framework for Teaching. However, the school is working towards incorporating more authentic opportunities for high levels of student thinking and participation across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

As a result, teachers work with students in small groups based on their needs through explicit modeling for students of the expectations for the lesson. Across classrooms, student discussions in groups or pairs helped students to make meaning of what was required of them during each lesson.

Supporting Evidence

- There are structures and routines which include collaborative protocols for students to have conversations and discussions in small groups based on questions posed by the teacher. In some classes, groups were assigned students who facilitated team conversations. While teachers asked a combination of low and high level questions based on the Depth of Knowledge and students had to explain their thinking, there were limited opportunities for students to create or pose their own questions and take full ownership of their learning.
- Across classrooms, students were engaged in some level of conversations and discussions reflecting the use of accountable talk stems and prompts where they were agreeing and disagreeing with claims presented by classmates, asking one another questions, and asking for clarification of key concepts between each other. However, in a few classrooms, the discussion was generally between teacher and student select students. For example, in a second grade reading class, students were in partnerships responding to questions such as, "What does income mean?" or "What are some ways that people earn an income?" In one first grade math class, the teacher asked one student to respond to the following questions, "Which number cards does Tony have now?" and "How do you know 19 is greater than 21?" Therefore, there were some missed opportunities for students to deepen understanding of the material through more authentic use of discussions with one another.
- Most teachers identify and generate prioritized learning objectives and teach lessons to support those objectives for students to work in small groups based on skill, strength or goals. For example, in a second grade reading classroom, students were asked to use text based evidence to answer text dependent questions from the story Super Crocodile. Students read independently at first and then worked to answer the questions in a group. However, students who understood the text were not allowed to veer away and formulate their own questions which were not literal based.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts and ensure that curricula and academic tasks are rigorous, accessible for English language learners and students with disabilities, and refined by teachers based on student assessment data.

Impact

Rigorous habits and higher order skills including those for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities are consistently emphasized in curricula and academic tasks across grades and subjects with some maps noting detailed supports, enrichment activities and examples of potential higher level thinking questions.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty align curricula to Common Core State Standards and create curriculum maps. The school provides ongoing professional learning opportunities once per month with Network support on adapting ReadyGEN and Go Math on creating scaffolds and supports for advanced students, ELLs and students with disabilities.
- Curricula have been developed to consistently emphasize rigorous tasks. For example, curriculum maps in first grade math incorporate the use of textual evidence, multi-step word problems, academic vocabulary and Listen and Draw/Model and Draw activities to scaffold instruction for all students including ELLs and students with disabilities. ELL supports include identifying number sentences that don't belong in sets of three, identifying numeral relationships, and the use of manipulatives were planned into lessons.
- Curriculum tasks and lesson plans include text dependent questions and students must cite their evidence to prove their thinking and support their answers, however in a few classes, the lesson plans did not demonstrate a clear plan to support their various learners, including students performing at or above grade level.
- The school utilizes a school google drive to share plans and maps with the grade above and below for each teacher. Lesson plans include teacher created materials and other resources to provide support to students in learning the content as well as skills and strategies which encourage higher order thinking such as synthesizing two texts, comparing and contrasting texts, and making inferences. For example, the school decided to supplement the story *Stelluna* from ReadyGen with texts from other sources such as Reading A-Z and Engage NY in order for their English language learners to be able utilize close reading strategies with texts more appropriate to their reading and interest level.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school consistently uses and adjusts curricula aligned assessment practices, grading policies and pedagogical strategies that focus on checks for understanding to create a clear portrait for students and staff regarding student achievement and progress.

Impact

Data driven decisions are made school wide leading to adjustments in pedagogical practices based on teacher team and classroom levels, and student assessment tools guide instructional decisions and prove clear and actionable learning targets for all learners. Student learning needs are met as teachers help them before, during and after each lesson.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus, as articulated by all teachers and administrators, centers on deepening the knowledge of students by consistently analyzing student data to drive instruction, by identifying trends in data and adjusting curriculum maps & teaching methods, in order to ensure all students individual needs are met and students are progressing academically. This work has led to increased focus on the design of tasks and teaching strategies, such as academic vocabulary and close reading strategies to include multiple entry points. This in turn allows for productive struggle for all students, with a focus on students with disabilities and high achieving students.
- On a weekly basis, vertical and horizontal teacher teams plan rigorous tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that support critical thinking and student next steps. Every week, teachers look at student work to determine individual student growth and adjust groups and instruction accordingly. For example, the kindergarten and first grade band of teachers decided to hone in on the miscue analysis from running records to determine whether students were making more visual or syntax errors. The data analysis revealed that students needed more visual cues and strategic support during small group phonological instruction and teachers were able to adjust plans to reflect these findings. The principal works closely with the school assessment team to track a variety of data, including , literacy tracking sheets created by Generation Ready, pre and post assessments in mathematics and English language arts; Fountas and Pinnel benchmarks; mid-unit reviews, in class post-it notes, teacher feedback and student self-assessment rubrics, and checklists. This disaggregated data is used by teacher teams to track student understanding of standards and to make adjustments to curriculum.
- Across the vast majority of classrooms there is evidence that teachers are monitoring progress of students within each unit of study through frequent strategies including the use of checklists, questioning, exit slips and conferencing in order to effectively group students. Students are aware of the purposeful groups and are able to articulate their understanding of the groupings and the range of work that needs to be done with their peers.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school establishes high expectations for all constituent groups, including students, teachers, and families, through a variety of communication practices. The administration consistently conveys important information to staff via the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) and the use of professional learning teams.

Impact

There is mutual accountability for student success by all stakeholders. The high levels of professionalism, quality instruction, and effective communication around academic, social, and behavioral expectations for students result in improved student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates with staff weekly highlighting best practices as well as checking in with staff regarding feedback, instructional expectations, and on-going professional development support. Feedback on observation reports utilizes specific language from the DfT with meaningful next steps for improvement. Teacher led professional learning sessions are held with the expectation that the skills or strategies learned are implemented into classrooms. Teachers also shared during the team meeting that they are a part of the hiring committee to select new staff, the expansion team for the school, as well as are able to craft the cycle of professional learning they receive during the course of the school year.
- There are monthly “Parents as Learning Partner Sessions” along with end of unit celebrations that encourage parents to participate in instructional practice and student learning activities aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, the school ensured that parents understood rubrics students were using and the criteria. Parents shared learning out voice and tone in writing selections to improve the quality of student’s narrative writing pieces. Parents also commented about receiving support through the YMCA afterschool program with homework assistance as a result of the collaborative efforts of the school to ensure continuity after the regular school day.
- Parents receive newsletters, translated into appropriate languages, as well as periodic progress reports in subject areas highlighting student progress within units of study. They attend monthly workshops and have access to assessment data allowing parents to be active participants in their child’s learning. One parent shared, “My child is making progress and reading and math and I can check on the progress myself.” In addition, during the parent meeting, parents shared that as a result of wanting their children to remain at the school, they were instrumental in the expansion process and helping to acquire the property across the street in order for the school to expand to serve Grades 4 and 5.
- Through use of rubrics and teacher and peer feedback 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 during the student meeting where students in all grade levels consistently defined expectations that were communicated to them around writing units and stated next steps, such as, why they need to demonstrate thinking in math tasks and how to connect their work to real world concepts.