



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Children's Lab School

Elementary School Q343

**45-45 42nd Street
Queens
NY 11104**

Principal: Brooke Barr

**Date of review: April 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

The School Context

PS 343 is an elementary school with 132 students with grades pre-kindergarten-kindergarten. The school population comprises 2% Black, 69% Hispanic, 10% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 44% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 is not available due to new school status.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	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	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and strategically embed the instructional shifts with the school's core values. Rigorous habits, tasks and units of study are embedded in a coherent way across grades.

Impact

The school's curricula decisions result in a comprehensive approach to college and career readiness for all students across grades and subjects. Scaffolds are available to challenge and engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers can articulate how they ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and other content area standards. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students can articulate strategies like writing or reciting simple facts, analyze basic ideas and listing ideas or words prior to writing simple sentences for integrating the instructional shifts. These strategies, such as open ended questioning, patterns and visual supports to activate prior knowledge have resulted in student progress in reading and writing for all subgroups of students, since there is a fluid connection between the topics like changing and recycling paper across grades. Teachers are planning opportunities for pre-kindergarten students to express academic vocabulary, such as stronger, weaker, differently and recycle during a science experiment and structured literacy time allows for kindergarten students to independently read leveled text using an on-line reading program, called RAZ kids.
- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills like retelling familiar stories including key details, with prompts, identifying the main topic and asking and answering questions about unknown words in a text; require students to create their own meaning, integrate skills into processes and use what they have learned to solve real-world problems across the content areas. These skills are coherently identified and embedded within curricula and academic tasks across grades and subject areas.
- Curricula and academic tasks require students, including English language learners and students with disabilities to think accurately and with fluidity, identify multiple meanings of words and text, engage in multiple thought processes and demonstrate thinking in new learning situations. Within one kindergarten teacher's lesson plan, students were required to use a combination of drawings, dictating and writing to develop opinion pieces about the book, "Career Day" by Anne Rockwell. Supports to allow all students to successfully complete the task included the Promethean Board, differentiated writing paper, and writing pens. These resources assisted students with composing their own opinion pieces in which they tell the reader a preference about the book. Furthermore, students writing levels have increased from September based on pre and post comparisons of written work.

Area of Focus

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

The staff consistently examines formative and summative data as well as analyzes student work within their teacher teams. Although teacher's instructional capacities have been strengthened, the connection to increased student achievement for all is a next step.

Impact

Teacher team work has resulted in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments, however, the mastery of goals for groups of students is not yet evident in a data collection framework.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers utilize protocols such as the “Four Foundations of Learning” which embeds authentic work, respect for diversity, continual learning and community to analyze specific skills according to grade level standards and look at and discuss student work samples. They also have clear next steps established based on patterns observed in student work samples to determine individual instructional needs of students. For example, during one of the grade meetings, teachers determined that more technology was needed to increase students' arc of learning. Teachers then revised English language arts (ELA) units to incorporate interactive technology using the Promethean Board, which is facilitated by students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classes. As a result, kindergarten students made great progress in reading; in September, 85% of 96 students were at a Pre-A level and in March, only 5% out of 96 students were Pre-A.
- Teachers and administrators meet at least two times a week to discuss school-wide patterns and trends based on their analysis of student work and common assessment data, as well as to set areas of focus for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students. For example, in the analysis of students reading and comprehension skills, teachers found that students needed more help identifying sight words. Visual prompts were offered to strengthen this skill. As a result, teachers shared that their practices have strengthened in analyzing and norming student work and then individualizing next steps for groups of students.
- Teachers meet in teams and during professional development time on Mondays to engage in inquiry work. One inquiry focus this year is to revise the assessment scoring so that there is a common language to determine targets. Teachers have been identifying groups of students, as well as refining curricula to meet students' needs. During these inquiry sessions, skill deficits are surfaced and benchmarks are created for student progress to be attained. As a result, guided reading is better aligned to students' specific needs and each small group is cohesive. Teachers' stated that read alouds turned into shared experiences using higher order questions, text to self-connections and print strategies. The impact of this work showed student proficiency improvement in modeling dialogue and reading sustainability.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports, including questioning and discussion techniques and the use of strategic entry points and extensions.

Impact

Across the vast majority of classrooms, curricula extensions promote deep reasoning and support students in producing meaningful work products that allow all learners to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Conversations with students indicated that student groups are flexible and fluid. In one transitional bilingual kindergarten classroom, students were in command of the Promethean Board, using a tactile approach and matching words to community workers. Students were also able to explain why the word match was correct and what teacher-developed station they would attend once this activity was completed. The high level of student autonomy indicated the comfort level developed by the teacher and the students' ownership of the classroom.
- A review of student portfolios in all of the pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms visited revealed consistent work in stretching the level of writing towards first grade standards. Students receive feedback from teachers that allows them to make choices about how to proceed. For example, in one kindergarten class of predominately English language learners (ELLs), teachers were using a research-based strategy using read alouds with embedded vocabulary instruction to implement text talk and to support vocabulary development. The principal stated that, "Transference of knowledge from one language to another is the essence of the strategy". Students were able to use a word through the multiple repetition strategy. As a result, all students in the class improved in using words in their spoken and written language.
- The principal explains that, "Authentic work is our core value". This philosophy is supported by the fact that the school's instructional focus is to connect learning opportunities with real world experiences. In one kindergarten class, students were studying recycling tools. The activity consisted of using paper and changing its form to show multiple usages. Students were working in teams and discussing how the paper looked, felt and smelled before and after the process. As a result of lesson authenticity and real world connections, students reading levels have improved by 86% since September and all students are engaged in the lesson.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments in all subject areas, tracks student progress and checks for understanding of previous and newly acquired knowledge.

Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through data analysis, as well as during instruction, are used to regularly guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes common assessments in literacy, math and writing such as Fountas & Pinnell running records, Teachers College primary literacy assessments and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), and performance tasks in writing and math, which provide information on student performance and progress. Each unit of study in literacy and social studies has a culminating performance task aligned to the content and to the standards. Every performance task is assessed with rubrics that are used in all classrooms. The rubrics are teacher-designed and aligned to the standards and students' developmental stages. For math, teachers use observation sheets and checklists to analyze student work, as well as individual diagnostic math interviews. Teachers agree that their assessment choices have sustained collaborative inquiry and continuously improve instruction.
- Teachers monitor student progress in small groups, during independent station work and through individual conferences. Pre- kindergarten teachers use *Teaching Strategies Gold* (TSG) as their authentic assessment system. Teachers document student learning through observations, photographs, and student work products. The work is rated using the TSG system which provides developmental rankings across all of the pre-kindergarten domains. In addition, each thematic unit has a culminating performance task in math and in English language arts (ELA). As a result, 75% of kindergarten students have mastered the ELA standards for the grade and are now working towards first grade standards.
- All subgroups of students are monitored by teacher observation and student self-assessments. Adjustments observed included extended time at a writing station, use of audio and visual aids, use of leveled texts that students can provide a rationale for their use, a variety of graphic organizers and informative artifacts which adorn every classroom. A review of teachers' conference notes indicate that formative assessments lead to instructional adjustments such as re-grouping students and re-teaching concepts.
- Teachers assess students in a variety of ways, such as discussion checklists to capture students' language skills during mini-lessons, reading conference notes, informal running records taken during both guided reading lessons and independent reading, writing conference notes, students using whiteboards and interactive modeling where teachers give clear and explicit demonstrations of expected behaviors, so that students can self-assess their behavior in comparison to the model. Through these assessments, teachers state that they are better able to plan for students as they grow academically in all content areas.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The Danielson Framework for Teaching is used in trainings and other modes of communication to consistently message high expectations to staff. Workshops and meetings keep families well apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

A clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness are evident using structures that support the school's high expectations and create mutual accountability towards success amongst staff, students and their families.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent classroom observations, purposeful discussions and timely feedback from administration reinforce school-wide expectations for teaching culture. High expectations for staff have been established through planning and curriculum design work. During the school's August Institute, teachers contributed to the development of a *Four Core Values* rubric and designed/revised curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards geared to meet the school's "ground and sky" instructional vision. Teachers also participated in an all-day professional learning session led by Wilson Foundations trainers and a Responsive Classroom consultant. Delivering these programs with fidelity has been a high priority for school leaders and teachers have been able to do so through the support of on-site training.
- Weekly staff newsletters that include "Lifelong Learners Question of the Week" that feature a relevant instructional practice, helps staff stay grounded and connected to the school's instructional path. In addition, Monday professional development sessions align to the school's vision and teachers' needs and have been supplemented by work with network coaches. Teachers agree that individual professional goals and one-on-one check-in meetings with school leaders have helped them improve their craft and maintain accountability towards school goals.
- Parents shared that they feel extremely supported by teachers who offer guidance and regularly send updates on their child's progress via verbal communication, report cards, phone and email outreach. Parents agreed that the school is a "second home" for their children and are grateful to the staff for their dedication to the teaching profession. In addition, the school's homework policy was designed in collaboration with a parent committee which consisted of active members of the School Leadership Team (SLT) and Parent's Association. Furthermore, there are twelve parents who have been trained and serve as Learning Leader volunteers who work in classrooms, the school's library, cafeteria, and recess yard. The involvement of parents has created a buy-in and high level of accountability for the entire community to help sustain the core values of the school.