

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Wave Preparatory Elementary School

Elementary School Q362

**535 Briar Place
Queens
NY 11691**

Principal: Gemma Ferguson

**Dates of review: April 30, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jean McKeon**

The School Context

Wave Preparatory Elementary School is an elementary school with 438 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 4. The school population comprises 39% Black, 57% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 93.0%.

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 | 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 | 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. | Focus | 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 | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The use of cross-curricula units of study allow for coherence across the grades with a focus on college and career readiness skills for all students. The planning and refinement of units and tasks based on students' specific needs provides all students access to learning opportunities in which they are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and teachers developed interdisciplinary curriculum based on the Common Core Learning Standards and the New York City science and social studies scope and sequence. The instructional cabinet worked collaboratively during the summer to review the Common Core Learning Standards and science and social studies scope and sequence to create unit overviews to ensure vertical alignment across grades. Grade level teams, led by instructional coaches, developed cross curricular units, including pre- and post- assessments to inform instructional decisions and student mastery for each unit. The interdisciplinary units, as well as the overall approach to curriculum development, have been revised as a result of ongoing analysis of teacher practice and student data. Instructional coaches and teachers attended professional learning on planning and practices on topics such as complex text selection, the close reading process, Thinking Maps, and the Understanding by Design Framework.
- The instructional shifts are strategically addressed through cross curricular units of study that include a balance of informational and literary text. Students are exposed daily, through a variety of texts, to science, social studies and the arts through the cross curricular units of study. Students build their knowledge through non-fiction, informational, and literacy text. In a grade two unit entitled "New York City Over Time" some of the texts include, "*A River Run Wild*", "*Dreaming of America: An Ellis Island Story*", "*The Story of the Statue of Liberty*", and "*In English of Course*". In mathematics, the Go Math curriculum and Common Core Learning Standards are continuously revisited to ensure that instruction and academic tasks require students to demonstrate fluency and deep understanding of the content.
- School-wide implementation of thinking maps provides students with a menu of supports so that all learners have access to the rigorous curriculum. Teacher team conversations include the analysis of student use of the double bubble thinking map for comparing and contrasting. Teachers utilized this scaffold to support their student's pre-writing and stated that this thinking map was especially helpful for their English language learners and students with disabilities. Extensions for high-achievers include student choice of graphic organizers.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

3.4 High Expectations

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations regarding teaching and learning to faculty and support their professional growth through various learning opportunities. The school provides regular communication and feedback to families in order to support all learners on a path towards college and career readiness.

Impact

As a result of school leaders' ongoing feedback around teaching and learning, faculty are provided with supports that address their professional growth that are monitored through classroom visits. The school's ongoing communication to families has equipped them with knowledge to understand their children's progress; however, home-school partnerships that support student learning are still being refined.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations for professionalism, instruction, and communications to all staff members. The staff handbook, data collection and analysis, record sheets for data collection, and templates for analyzing student work exemplify the school's high expectations. The school leaders' clear goals and consistency in practice are evident in all aspects of daily life at the school. Instructional coaches and teacher leaders design and deliver differentiated professional learning that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The instructional and professional development teams meet regularly to discuss student progress and teacher's next steps. The instructional coaches, guided by the school leaders' feedback, deliver small group and one-to-one professional learning to support teacher's growth along the Danielson Framework for Teaching continuum.
- Clear expectations for classroom environment, student portfolios, and bulletin boards are communicated to staff and evident throughout the school. Consistent practices throughout the grades support student development of academic and personal behaviors. Students, parents and teachers articulated that they are proud to be members of the WAVE Prep school community.
- In order to communicate high expectations to all of the school community, a parent handbook, highlighting expectations, systems, policies, and mission is distributed in English and Spanish and is reviewed with families at the annual Back to School Night in September. Parents and students are asked to review the handbook and return the signed contract. This year, 100% of the parents returned their signed family contracts. However, the school has not yet developed systems so that parents become true learning partners to support their children's academic progress.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teaching practices across the vast majority of classrooms consistently align to curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points with high-quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

Impact

As a result of discussions at the team and school level, there is a shared understanding around student learning that ensures teacher practice across the vast majority of classrooms provides opportunities for all students to engage in appropriately challenging tasks that allow them to demonstrate higher order thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In the vast majority of classrooms visited, lessons were aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and informed by the instructional shifts. For example, in a self-contained kindergarten English language arts (ELA) class, students used text features to identify animal characteristics. The students worked in four tiered groups to organize key details to determine the main idea of the story from sentence strips. Students were able to identify animal characteristics using vocabulary and pictures. Student writing samples displayed incorporated thinking maps for organization, text-based evidence, and lined writing paper that was scaffolded to support student levels. During a third grade ELA lesson, partners evaluated an anchor writing piece using a checklist in preparation of completing an extended writing response. Partners assessed the model for topic sentences, details, the conclusion, the use of thinking maps, and the incorporation of at least four details from the text. All students were engaged and were able to contribute in meaningful discussions.
- In all classrooms visited, student-to-student conversations and participation in collaborative activities in flexible grouping was observed. Several teachers utilized turn and talks while modeling for students. All students, including those in kindergarten, understand how to be active listeners and contribute to group discussions. In all classes visited, students worked together with partners or in small groups for guided practice. Teachers throughout the school create flexible groups based on assessment and classroom data. For example, in an Integrated Collaborative Team (ICT) teaching class, teachers utilized parallel teaching strategies to introduce fractions and parts of a whole. The teachers used the pre-assessment data to determine student groups and provided a variety of manipulatives to support student understanding.
- Students were actively engaged in meaningful activities in the majority of classrooms. Work products displayed on boards and in student portfolios met or exceeded grade level standards. In a first grade ICT math class, students were grouped based on data from an end of unit assessment. One group worked with manipulatives, such as cubes and classroom objects to measure using non-standards units. The second group worked on an extension to the math curriculum introducing the second grade standard of telling and writing time to the nearest five minutes. After identifying time on clock manipulatives, students were asked to record six of their own daily activities and to draw the time on an analog and digital clock. The teacher also displayed anchor charts to support the English language learners (ELLs) in this group. Both groups were able to apply math concepts in real-world situations.

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| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use common assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula to analyze information on students' learning outcomes and to create a clear portrait of student mastery across grades and subjects.

Impact

Common assessment practices consistently monitor student understanding and allow teachers to make curricular and instructional adjustments so that all students make significant progress, including students with disabilities and English language learners based on actionable and meaningful feedback regarding their progress.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning, middle and end of the school year, all teachers administer benchmark assessments to track student progress, set goals, plan lessons and grouping that provide targeted instruction. Benchmark assessments include Fountas and Pinnell running records, on demand writing, and Go Math unit assessments with short responses. School leaders monitor student data on the benchmarks to identify progress by analyzing student and teacher data. In addition to the benchmark assessments, unit pre and post assessments are administered for each cross-curricula unit of study and math unit. Teachers analyze the pre and post assessment data that include item skill analysis to refine the curriculum and adjust instruction. For example, kindergarten teachers shared that they displayed pictures aligned to vocabulary for student reference when writing. The school leaders also use this information to determine the effectiveness of instruction in particular units of study.
- All cross-curricula units of study culminate with a writing task. Essential questions, supported by ongoing reading response questions are part of the weekly planning guides. From this ongoing work, students have a plethora of evidence at the end of each unit to compose their writing task. Students are pre-assessed at the beginning of each unit and receive a score aligned to the culminating task rubric. The teachers use the pre-assessment data to identify students' strengths and the skills and strategies that need additional support throughout the unit. During their writing process students complete drafts, peer assess, and receive feedback from the teacher on a "revision checklist". Upon completion of the final draft, each student rubric includes detailed teacher comments on each competency scored.
- Students self-assess using rubrics that are consistently provided at the beginning of math and cross-curricular units. Upon completion of tasks students in grades two through four self-assess by circling their performance levels on rubrics using pencil. The teacher then evaluates student work products or assessment on the same rubric. Students also write their own feedback identifying what they did well, what they need to improve on, and what strategies they will use to improve. Students spoke fluently about the use of rubrics and appreciate knowing what is expected at the beginning of each task.

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

The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards that have strengthened teachers' instructional practices. Embedded distributive leadership structures create various opportunities for staff members to work with peers and school leaders in making key school decisions.

Impact

The inclusion of all teachers and paraprofessionals in teams empowers them to assume responsibility for collectively improving teacher practice and student mastery, by being deeply involved in school level decisions that create school-wide instructional coherence.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level teacher teams meet weekly for a total of 210 minutes devoted to inquiry work and the analysis of data that leads to curricula refinement and the identification of specific instructional next steps to support student achievement. The observed kindergarten teacher team utilized the school-wide protocol for looking at student work. Teachers analyzed writing tasks from a sampling of ELLs. Teachers recorded the trends on students' successes and what they needed support with. The teachers identified three specific writing strategies to further support the ELLs. Professional learning teams also have daily common preparation periods and teachers shared they use this time to collaborate and plan instruction. Specifically, teachers use this common time to refine units of study, choose complex texts and create text-dependent questions.
- The school-wide inquiry team is comprised of the school leaders, instructional coaches, and grade level lead teachers. This team meets regularly to analyze data trends, performance tasks, and lesson plans. The school-wide inquiry team analyzes this data to create vertical and horizontal alignment concerning procedures, expectations, and teacher practice across the school. Data analysis and feedback from observations enables the instructional coaches to provide targeted professional learning opportunities that further develop teacher practice and increase student achievement across the school.
- Instructional coaches are assigned to each grade to lead and support the classroom teachers. Teacher leaders also support special education and English as second language teachers. These coaches coordinate the inquiry work at the team level and teachers shared that they rely on their expertise and support. Instructional coaches provide ongoing, need-based, targeted professional learning opportunities for teachers aimed at improving planning and instruction for all students. Instructional coaches also model lessons and provide structured vertical and horizontal inter-visitations. A teacher shared that her grade coach videoed her instruction over a week's period and collaboratively critiqued and identified next steps to improve her practice. In addition, teachers attend various professional learning opportunities both in and out of the building to experience new initiatives and support their pedagogy.