



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The 51st Avenue Academy

Elementary School Q877

**76-05 51st Avenue
Queens
NY 11373**

Principal: Jason Chin

Date of review: December 11, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson

The School Context

The 51st Avenue Academy is an elementary school with 540 students from grade 4 through grade 5. The school population comprises of 34% Hispanic, 2% White, and 62% Asian students. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 98%.

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	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	Celebration	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Across the vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact

As a result of these highly effective teacher practices, classes are student centered with teachers working with small groups as needed. Furthermore, all students are articulate, highly conversational about their work and next steps, as well as take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All classrooms visited had students working in small groups based on homogenous and heterogeneous levels with students representing the bottom, middle and top thirds based on reading levels, skills, goals, or lesson target. For example, one Math class had students working interpreting the remainder in division by analyzing real world situations in word problems based on their level of understanding and proficiency. While another class asked readers to determine the mood of the story by analyzing the setting and characters. Students had books appropriate to their reading and comprehension levels.
- Teachers conducted mini lessons, in a shortened format as needed and pulled students to work on the rug when needed if they didn't understand a concept throughout all classes. For instance, in one class, students were asked to develop their literacy essay by listing three supporting reasons that support their thesis. As the teacher monitored students working in pairs, she pulled students to the front of the room to help them with their work.
- The ESL teacher pushes in to co-teach with general education teachers to provide on-site support for English Language Learners (ELLs) in the form of explicit front loading of vocabulary, differentiated questioning and graphic organizers.
- In all English Language Arts (ELA) and math classes visited, lessons were student centered with teachers providing support, modeling, or instruction based on need and learning styles. For example, some students were working on the floor with manipulatives trying to solve problems, while other students used teacher-created materials, such as graphic organizers to support learners.
- Across classrooms, students were all engaged in the lesson and were empowered to push the thinking of their classmates with higher-order thinking questions or alternatives during table conversations. In one classroom, students were working in book clubs and participated in debates and discourse about questions using Webb's Depth of Knowledge which they generated on their own, based on the book of their choice.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses assessments, rubrics, checklists and grading policies to determine student progress, and provide actionable feedback to students. The school uses common assessments to determine progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

While data-driven decisions are made school-wide and lead to rigorous curricula adjustments and student self-assessment tools guide instructional decisions and provide actionable learning targets for learners, there needs to be a clear picture of monitoring the performance for students with disabilities and English language learners.

Supporting Evidence

- While the school has common assessments, such as Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, Common Core aligned checklists, rubrics, running records, and Go Math Assessment tools, which are aligned to their curricula and analyzes student progress towards goals, there were gaps in analysis for students not performing on grade level and the mastery for students with disabilities and ELLs across the school.
- In most of the classrooms visited, teachers circulated throughout the classroom as they facilitated instruction. In one classroom, when the teacher noticed confusion, the teacher stopped the students who needed additional support or clarification and helped them before allowing students to move forward.
- The majority of students across classrooms, maintained notebooks with tabs which contained dates with corresponding Common Core Learning Standards and were able to demonstrate supporting evidence and the date when they mastered standards in English Language Arts or math, however some students said they only began this practice recently and will begin to track their progress soon in other subject areas.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

As a result of the adoption of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and Go Math, rigorous habits are embedded across classrooms, within units and tasks that require all learners, including student subgroups, to think critically and create their own meaning through evidence based expectations. Teachers use student data to ensure all learners have access to curricula and tasks are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's curriculum team reviews all standards and scope and sequence for all subject areas and identifies priority standards, for example, citing text based evidence from non-fiction texts, applying conceptual mathematical understanding to solve complex problems are included in curriculum and unit maps. These standards are incorporated into all unit plans and corresponding lesson plans.
- Across content areas, teachers utilize progression levels and grade continuums to address the needs of all of learners, including bottom, middle and top thirds, to ensure they are being exposed to similar content materials that are appropriate for their performance level.
- Unit plans incorporate the use of Ready Gen as a support tool, with the newly adopted Teachers College Reading Writing Project (TCRWP). Science and social studies are integrated throughout all subject areas in a meaningful manner through the use of increasingly challenging and varying genres of literature, including, but not limited to books and poems text, such as "*The Upstairs Room*", "*Thank You Ma'am*", and "*The Necklace*".
- Academic tasks are planned so that students must cite text-based evidence to support their thinking and answers in humanities lessons and students are required to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of math word problems.
- Habits of mind activities are incorporated and explicitly embedded in classroom instruction and academic tasks. For example, students are expected to persist through challenging tasks, listen to one another with understanding, think flexibly, question each other, think about their own thinking, and apply past knowledge to new learning situations.

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 messages important information to staff through the components of the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* and use of professional learning teams.

Impact

There is mutual accountability of student success by all stake holders. These best practices have resulted in high levels of professionalism, quality instruction, and effective communication around academic, social, and behavioral expectations for students resulting in improved student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders establish elevated expectations for professionalism and standards of effective teaching across the school by differentiating professional learning experiences based on teachers' learning and personal style of teaching. Team building activities are coordinated to build respect and camaraderie among staff where staff members have a key voice in school decisions, including the curricula instruction and other decisions.
- Staff members implement effective strategies for communicating high expectations based on tasks, which encourage and support inquiry, collaboration, and ownership so that students are challenged to meet or exceed expectations. For example, students are aware of the type of rigorous questions they will be required to take on the advanced placement exams in high school and beyond.
- The school provides ongoing, clear lines of verbal and written communication to parents, such as online parent updates, frequent progress reports, open door policy for parents, Family Fridays where parents come to school to work side by side with their children to better understand the Common Core Standards. In addition, the school provides parent workshops on Tuesdays, based on parent input and suggestions, where parents expressed that they are better able to help their children at home, as a result of these support systems.
- Teachers receive high-quality professional development from Teachers College, along with in-house coaching that has led to consistent teaching practices within and across grades. An example includes the use of the effective use of book clubs for all students to help improve reading comprehension and fluency.
- Family Fridays, which occur the first Friday in every month, allow parents to visit classrooms to work side by side with their children in engaging activities in order to stay up-to-date on current teaching practices, curriculum mandates and learn the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.

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

Teacher teams engage in structured professional collaborations using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning.

Impact

Professional collaborations have resulted in improved teacher practice in teacher questioning and discussion and teachers being able to assess their students' understanding. In addition, these structures have led to teachers having a voice in key decisions that directly impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- During team meetings, teachers utilize protocols, such as warm and cool feedback to discuss student performance on tasks in mathematics and English language arts, as well as next steps and implications for teacher classroom practice with an action plan and target dates. During an observed meeting, teachers were charting the responses after examining a cross sample of student responses to the latest administered performance task. They compared findings for the lower and top groups of students.
- Teams are able to share with one another in a risk-free environment, while engaging in frequent inter-visitations that provide critical feedback to one another. There is also the use of a checklist that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, which allows for analysis of student mastery by teacher, class, grade, and subject.
- Administration and teachers offer specific and clear examples of teacher leadership that illustrate how teachers and teacher leaders play a vital role in school level decision making, as evidenced by the literacy coach becoming the assistant principal and the data specialist facilitating meetings and coordinating professional learning activities,
- As a result of teacher teams expressing their discontent to administration regarding the lack of rigorous content within the Ready Gen reading program, the school decided to postpone the full implementation and adopt Teachers College Writing and Reading Project to provide a more rigorous reading and writing program for their students.