



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Fort Hill Collaborative**

**Elementary School R010**

**80 Monroe Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10301**

**Principal: Jennifer Gonzalez-Funes**

**Date of review: April 20, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico**

## The School Context

Fort Hill Collaborative is an elementary school with 63 students in kindergarten. The school population comprises 31% Black, 55% Hispanic, 3% White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 61% of the students enrolled and girls account for 39%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 is not available due to new school status.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leader and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote readiness for all students through curricula and academic tasks emphasizing rigorous expectations for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs).

### Impact

The instructional impact ensures all students' needs are met when planning for engagement in rigorous, standards-driven tasks to prepare learners for college and career readiness. Revisions have ensured that students are demonstrating their thinking and understanding consistently.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and school leadership revised unit plans, maps and lessons after identifying students who were struggling using the Common Core programs, including Core Knowledge Reading and Go Math. Teachers surfaced a concern with the flow of the programs and the readiness of their students to be successful. Seeking coherence and integration of instructional shifts, they created a unit map driven by essential questions from the Social Studies curriculum. The school has also adopted instructional materials to support the needs of students including reading reform and math exemplars.
- Lesson plans indicate a plan for differentiation to meet the needs of students, including the ELLs and SWDs through investigation. In order to create the overall unit plan and maps, teachers met regularly to collaborate and design lesson using the model of backward design. Each teacher is compensated to work on curriculum design and revisions weekly. Data and student work review protocols are utilized to refine curricula and academic tasks to ensure access and engagement for all learners, including ELLs and SWDs.
- Unit maps and lesson plans address the needs of ELLs and SWDs as evidenced by the kindergarten bi-lingual Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) lesson plans that described possible student misconceptions and errors anticipating and preparing to correct before the completion of the lesson. Teachers embed academic vocabulary and use visuals to support ELLs with explicit demonstration. Students will meet in differentiated groups led by a teacher or paraprofessional, with a group of advanced learners working independently. All students have access to math manipulatives to construct visual representations of the concept.
- Through teacher development, the school is deepening academic task development. The principal uses the unit plan and pacing calendar to hold teachers accountable during classroom visits and observations and provides feedback to increase the rigor in habits and higher-order skills. The transition to math exemplars has increased students' investigation into math concepts every Friday, including ELLs and SWDs. Student-generated work samples are examined to ensure coherence across the classrooms on the grade.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned with curricula and reflect core beliefs of how students learn best through multi-sensory instructional approaches that build student independence. However student work products and discussion reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Students are expected to demonstrate mastery of rigorous outcomes, yet learning activities are partially aligned with intended learning outcomes. Instructional plans and tasks inconsistently provide cognitively- appropriate entry points into learning, resulting in uneven student engagement in suitably challenging tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- Student grouping by ability resulted in low level tasks limiting student engagement and depth of thinking, particularly for proficient students. Materials and tasks in two classrooms did not allow for differentiated opportunities and did not extend thinking for higher-achieving students, resulting in limited engagement and student ownership of learning.
- Teachers have revised methods of the workshop model to narrow the mini-lesson creating additional time for students to engage in investigation and exploration, however, group work is incorporated into the design of the lesson approximating students' entry points with uneven success. Math lesson plans indicate grouping for four tiers of student ability: novice, apprentice, practitioner and expert. The level of cognitive demand between the group tasks is comparable and does not appropriately challenge most students' thinking as evidenced by the student work products. Students demonstrated the ability to use mathematic academic language related to shapes and attributes; however there was little evidence that students analyzed or compared in order to meet the learning outcomes of the lesson.
- Lesson plans stated few questions that aligned to the learning outcomes and do not require higher-order thinking to respond with accuracy. While instructional shifts are evident in math and science; teacher teams are revisiting literacy curricula and tasks to examine how to ensure that instructional shifts and high standards are expected from all students, particularly bilingual students and ELLs.
- Rigorous instruction is expected and planned for as evidenced in individual teacher plans, yet the math learning activity of solving shape riddles did not allow for students to analyze nor compare the traits of shapes. In several classrooms, a cognitive disconnect was observed where the teacher's model of learning did not align with students' independent practice. Another teacher demonstrated a math model aligned to the intended outcome of the lesson, however the students went off to work independently on an activity not aligned to the outcome of the lesson.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teachers use common assessments and rubrics aligned to key standards to gain an understanding of student progress toward goals that allow for actionable feedback to students and adjustments to instruction. Across classrooms, teachers utilize a hybrid approach to the creation of common assessments reflective of the big ideas and skills embedded in the school's Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula.

### Impact

The school's backwards design approach to unit planning requires teachers to be cognizant of the desired outcomes and key understandings of each unit. This practice results in teachers creating assessments and rubrics aligned to the precise skills and concepts taught.

### Supporting Evidence

- During weekly Inquiry Team meetings, teachers analyze assessment data to measure student growth and identify gaps of understanding. When kindergarten teachers examined literacy assessment data, including baseline data, Reading Reform diagnostics and Fountas & Pinnell running records and concepts of print checklists, they revealed a gap in early reading readiness skill attainment. As a result, teachers across classrooms, made adjustments to curricula and pacing calendars to maintain reading readiness along with ongoing formative assessment.
- Teachers across classrooms, including Science/ Exploratorium, consistently invite students to check their work using self- assessment rubrics which incorporate a consistent rating scale. Additionally teacher-created rubrics have been developed in writing, math, Teacher continuously refine rubrics to strengthen connections to standards, content, and communication of next steps.
- The school has developed a strategic assessment calendar to purposefully assess and collect data and information about student progress. The current calendar outlines summative assessments and teacher team is in the process of incorporating informal and formative assessments into the plan.
- Teachers are able to gain finite information to provide students with feedback about their mastery as well as actionable next steps. To address misconceptions, teachers shifted away from Core Knowledge and implemented the daily routines of Reading Reform to better anticipate readiness for guided reading. These efforts have resulted in 78% of kindergarten students meeting or exceeding reading benchmarks.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The principal consistently communicates high expectations to staff, students and families as well as provides supports to achieve those expectations. Staff effectively communicates expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations.

**Impact**

Collaborative decision making invites constituents from the school community into a discussion about instruction and partnerships promote positive school culture and increases ownership of student success.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leader and faculty provide families with triennial progress reports communicating learning expectations and individual student progress toward meeting expectations in core subject areas, in addition to report cards. Monthly family engagement events are scheduled including monthly “Coffee and Tea with the Principal,” providing a forum to discussion educational topics and at-home support, and teacher-facilitated curriculum workshops, where families participate in Common Core Learning Standards aligned activities and tasks as learners.
- Families receive monthly newsletters, outlining important calendar events and detailed descriptions of school-wide activities and learning objectives. Newsletters are backpacked home and are also posted on the school website. School staff send daily and weekly robo-call phone system reminders to families in both English and Spanish. Parents shared that they utilize the website and connecting with teachers and staff via email with positive results. As a result of communication including verbal and written teacher feedback, families affirm that they are aware of the academic progress students are making throughout the school year.
- The school’s mission statement and core values promote high expectations for all students to staff. Furthermore, the staff receives “Monday Blasts,” an email detailing the weekly focus, goals and events.
- Notably, teachers have participated in up to five book studies of varying principles. Several texts supported teachers in effectively organizing classrooms so that students can learn, including strategies to maximize instructional time and foster respectful interactions where students feel safe to take intellectual risks. Responding to the staff’s inexperience with kindergarten learners, the principal identified other texts that addressed developmentally appropriate pedagogy. The principal participates in book club discussions and connects to learning- focused feedback to communicate high expectations for teaching and learning.
- Student portfolios indicate the level of performance for students and accompany a content-specific rubric noting next steps. Students were able to approximate at describing next steps and explaining rubrics.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional inquiry-based collaborations and teacher teams that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. The nature of the staffing and the school’s vision consistently promotes the development of teacher leadership capacity leading to improved student learning across the school.

**Impact**

Teacher engagement in collaborations and teachers teams strengthen instructional and leadership capacities of teachers. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students in common using protocols subsequently leading to improvements in teacher practice as well as student progress.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Each teacher has assumed a leadership role and serves a key role in instructional development in a core area. Teachers follow protocols to look at student work which ensures that the impact of their planning and analysis leads to better learning. As a result, the teachers are able to articulate their growth and development areas. Teachers lead or participate in weekly learning sessions and family meetings. The Science Lab teacher plays as integral role in the key decisions of the school as the school’s webmaster and mentor for new teachers.
- Teacher team meetings have purposefully led to instructional adjustments including a purposeful shift away from worksheets which did not present students with challenging, relevant content. During weekly team meetings, teachers engage in inquiry protocols examining student work which has resulted in revisions to lesson planning, particularly grouping of students and activities as well as the type of assessments that reveal student needs with clarity.
- In the founding year, the teachers have made efforts to forge professional relationships beyond the school, partnering for planning and preparation of professional learning sessions. Following district level professional development, one teacher partnered with teachers from a nearby school to turnkey and facilitate the learning. Teachers traveled to the other school to participate in the session, forging relationships and perspectives beyond the school.