



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Curtis School

Elementary School R019

**780 Post Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10310**

Principal: Mary Petrone

**Date of review: May 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rafaela Landin**

The School Context

Curtis is an elementary school with 622 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 15% Black, 67% Hispanic, 10% White, 3% 4% Asian and 3% other students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 19% 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 92.7%.

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	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently embed high expectations in all aspects of school culture, focusing on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, college and career readiness, and successfully partnering with families.

Impact

Systems and structures that support a culture of high expectations, responsibility, and professional collaboration for staff, students, and families result in mutual accountability amongst all stakeholders for achieving the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership communicates expectations for teaching and learning to the staff by conducting daily instructional walkthroughs using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide feedback to the staff. The principal sends out bi-monthly newsletters to teachers on school-wide expectations such as data snapshots using student work, use of rubrics to provide feedback to students, student promotion and leadership portfolios, and evidence of students' self-reflections in the form of success criteria. Reviews of observations reveal that teachers receive feedback on questioning, engagement and assessment of student learning in alignment to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers reported that due to the feedback, the practice on questioning techniques and engagement is improving school-wide.
- The school's professional development plan defines the expectations and reflects training for the use of the Common Core Learning Standards writing and reading continuum in grades kindergarten-five, the unit and lesson plan template, rubrics, and checklists for all performance tasks, and student self-reflections such as the "Success Criteria." Evaluation of unit plans and conversations with teachers revealed that across grades and content areas, the use of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Framework to develop questions for rigor. A review of the lesson plan template and units clearly delineate expectations of instruction for all staff. For example, a review of a fifth grade math lesson plan showed the essential questions, Common Core Learning Standards, learning goals, grouping, materials, vocabulary, supports, scaffolds and extensions for different learners, assessments and forms for feedback provided to students.
- Parents shared that the school sends frequent updates on the progress of their children toward the expectations for learning. At the beginning of the year, the school provides each family with a parent handbook in English and Spanish and this booklet informs parents about the Dual Language program in the school. Furthermore, the school creates several school-wide events throughout the year to support students' progress towards meeting college and career readiness and the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. These activities include: workshops on "Leader in Me", "PS 19 Online Resources", "Math Common Core". Parent attendance has increased as a result of these workshops.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, performance tasks and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation across most classrooms visited.

Impact

Opportunities for extended learning and demonstration of high-level student thinking, participation, and ownership vary across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Students have opportunities to engage in rich structured conversations during whole group and small group instruction. They use questions, prompts, and protocols to engage in discussions. The principal notes that there are increased opportunities for student talk, and building on classmates responses making student thinking visible. However, these structures were not consistent in the vast majority of classrooms. For example, in a third grade dual language class, students were observed working in small groups discussing different questions posted by the teacher. Most of the students were observed demonstrating high levels of participation and engagement. However, some students were not fully engaged and did not take responsibility for their role within the group discussion.
- Teachers have been encouraged by the administration to facilitate and support students in leading discussions and explain their thinking. Teachers stated they are more comfortable with promoting high levels of rigorous discussions with their students. Classroom visits reveal that students are provided with questions to use with their partner to engage in high level work. In some classrooms, teachers use Socratic seminar questions to enhance student discourse. For example, in a grade five reading class, students were observed in small groups discussing the different types of conflicts that exist in texts. Students engaged in the discussion by using a team talk protocol such as, "Why do you say that? I agree with ...," "Let's look on page 146...", "I disagree with you because on the last paragraph it says...", making their thinking visible however, this was not a persistent school-wide practice. In an Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) second grade class, students were working in five small groups and the teachers and a student teacher were leading the discussions. There was a limited opportunity for students to explain their thinking and to talk with one another without ongoing mediation from the teachers.
- Across classrooms, students had opportunities to engage in DOK level three and four tasks on their own, in pairs, or in groups. In a grade four math class, students were asked to measure angles, draw angles of a specific measure, and solve problems involving angle measures. To support students with domain specific vocabulary, students were provided with relevant vocabulary words to address the topic in discussions with partners and in groups.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts across grades and subjects for all students. Teachers utilize work products and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks for individual and groups of students.

Impact

The school curricula are coherent and the refinements of academic tasks promote student engagement and college and career readiness across grades and subjects for all students including the lowest and highest achieving students, English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SwDs).

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans across subjects cite essential questions aligned to the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix, learning objectives are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and domain specific vocabulary. In addition, lessons include the use of multiple representations and strategies to model teachers' thinking, guided practice and independent practice, and activities for ELLs, SwDs, and high functioning students. For example, a second grade writing lesson plan includes tasks to support the diverse learners including emergent bilingual students. Supports include modeling, small group instruction, visuals, rubrics and checklists indicating the expectation of the task.
- The school's decisions to adopt ReadyGEN, GO Math!, Harcourt science and social studies and to use resources from Engage NY demonstrates their efforts in aligning the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Furthermore, they have created curriculum maps aligning all units in order to build coherence across grades and content areas. For example, the leadership and the staff indicated that they use the Common Core Learning Standards continuum for fiction and non-fiction as a tool to ensure all units of study in nonfiction and non-narrative writing align to one another and the standards. In reviewing these units across grades and subjects such as English language arts (ELA), math and science, the documents indicate "I can" learning objectives demonstrating grade-level standards.
- Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using students' work in literacy and math. Based on an analysis of student work, teachers group students based on the highest, average, and lowest levels of understanding. For example, after a review of the grade 2 mid-chapter checkpoint data analysis, teacher teams decided to re-adjust the math lessons, specifically on measurement, by: adding prompting questions to support language and verbal needs, scaffold DOK language for organizing, representing and interpretation, use of native language strategically, and encouraging students to use DOK vocabulary when explaining their work. Teachers translate units in ReadyGEN and the school has purchased Spanish literature to support balanced literacy instruction in the Dual Language classes.

Findings

The school has developed common assessments, grading policies, and rubrics aligned to the curricula, which offer a clear portrait of student mastery of goals and track student progress across grades and content areas.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding academic achievement. Analyses of data lead to adjustments to curricula and instruction so all students demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- As stated by the leadership and teams, across classrooms, teachers use Fountas and Pinnell to assess the independent reading level of all students. Additionally, the school has an assessment plan, which delineates assessments, including performance-based tasks, in all content areas, grade levels, by frequency and the periods for each assessment. Additionally, teachers reported that they use the results of the data to revise and add instructional strategies to ascertain academic achievement. Support given to students based on the analysis of the data include: graphic organizers, small group instruction, intervention services, and technology support. For example, a fifth grade lesson plan in reading showed that the teacher grouped the students according to the students' independent reading levels. Students were provided with varied exit slips at the end of the lesson to ascertain attainment of lesson's objectives.
- A review of portfolios during classroom visitations and conversations with students showed evidence of the use of rubrics and feedback given to students to advance their learning. Furthermore, students were able to articulate the purpose of the rubrics, the "Success Criteria" and the self-reflection used to evaluate student work. For example, a second grade student spoke about how the feedback given by teachers has improved her writing. She stated, "I can improve my writing by giving more details. I need to add more adjectives." In addition, students indicated that sometimes they work with a partner to help them with their work. Students and teachers shared that the school uses rubrics, reflection sheets, checklists and the success criteria for students to conduct peer editing and give each other feedback.
- Teacher teams meet weekly in grade common planning time to make adjustments and revisions to the curriculum maps, units of study and lessons based on the analysis of student work, data results, and expectations of the curricula. Assessment data is used to target students for small group instruction, intervention, conferring and individualized support. For example, during the teacher interview and meeting with school leadership, they report that after the administration of Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments, daily lessons are adjusted and tiered activities are provided to individual students to ascertain access to the curricula. Reading volunteers and technology are additional resources used by the school to support all students in achieving academic goals. For example, in first grade, teachers adjusted a lesson in math by scaffolding the content to include drawings, graphing, and problem solving.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, professional collaborations to develop curriculum, analyze student work, and plan instruction to promote the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that teachers play an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has led to instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Effective teacher leadership in key decision-making centered on curricula and instruction facilitates student engagement and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts through collaborations on the vertical alignment of curriculum and discussions to unpack the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers use this knowledge to develop units of study and performance tasks. During a fifth grade inquiry team meeting, teachers had an agenda and shared that the school uses Google docs to create writing continuum curriculum maps in all content areas. Additionally, a review of team minutes reflect that teachers use a protocol to look at student work and use online videos from Engage NY to promote the implementation of the instructional shifts.
- To build capacity and support teacher teams in data driven inquiry work, the school provides opportunities for teachers to engage in inter-visitations and receive feedback from their peers and the administrative team. The school is involved in training through the New York City Department of Education Reciprocal Peer Mentoring Program. Each teacher takes turn as a host and visitor. Videos of best teaching practices are shared on line for the staff to reflect on areas of strength and growth. The school uses an inter-visitation protocol for reciprocal mentoring to prepare for each visit. The Danielson Framework for Teaching is used by teachers and the administrators to build a common language of best teaching practices for implementing instruction aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, the school affords teachers opportunities to receive professional development facilitated by a teacher development coach, network specialists, coaches, and administrators.
- The school provides opportunities for all teachers to have a leadership role within teacher teams by having them provide suggestions and recommendations aligned to the school goals and the instructional focus. Some of the teams that play an integral role in key decision-making on increasing student outcomes are the instructional, inquiry, teacher leader, and special education teams. In addition, the lighthouse team worked collaboratively with teachers in grades kindergarten-fifth to incorporate activities in the school curricula for students and strategies for parents on the seven Habits of Leader in Me.