

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 21 Margaret Emery-Elm Park

Elementary School R021

**168 Hooker Place
Staten Island
NY 10303**

Principal: Gina Moreno

**Date of review: May 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cynthia Dickman**

The School Context

P.S. 21 Margaret Emery-Elm Park is an Elementary school with 404 students from PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 21% Black, 58% Hispanic, 20% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 34% 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 92.3%.

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.	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	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	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.	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality
Indicator:

4.2 Teacher teams and leadership
development

Rating: Proficient

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in teams for collaborative planning that promotes the achievement of Common Core and the instructional shifts. Teachers take on leadership roles and are empowered to give input in key school-wide decisions.

Impact

The inquiry-based professional collaborations strengthen teachers' instructional capacity. Leadership structure provides a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers on each grade volunteer to be a part of various school teams which include: instructional team, inquiry team and data team. The instructional team's focus is the curriculum and when it will be taught across the grades to adjust vertical coherence. The team meets weekly with the data review team. The data team meets weekly to analyze and revise what was taught to students. When the data team meets each week with the instructional team, the teachers review the data and discuss students' progress. The inquiry team meets weekly to discuss the strategies to be used for the different subgroups and the planning of next steps, with a focus on the questioning. The inquiry team creates planning and preparation templates which identify the skill being taught, how much the students mastered, what the students were challenged with, the next teaching steps and what questions the teachers can present to deepen the students' understanding. There is a team leader who runs each of the meetings.
- At the start of the year, teachers completed a professional development survey to see what the needs were and which staff members could use their expertise to provide some of the professional development. As a result, a book study with different groups was created using the book, *Thinking through Quality Questioning, Deepening Student Engagement*, by Jackie Acree Walsh and Beth Dankert Sattes. Teachers also were identified to support the staff with professional development on using SMARTboards to enhance lessons, differentiating curriculum to improve the performance of English language learners and reading and understanding individualized education plans. As a result, a year-long professional development plan was created with a variety of learning opportunities designed to best meet the teachers' needs.
- During the team meetings, teachers stated that they choose to be grade leaders, or on the wellness committee or Lighthouse team. They said, "Everyone is then on board with it. Teachers have more accountability because we feel we are more of the decision makers of the school. School is more like a family where everyone has voice. Anything we bring to table, we are able to try to make it work. We are empowered by the administration."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While teachers are providing supports and scaffolds to meet the needs of all students, the use of extensions that foster deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

Impact

Teachers' instructional practices enable all learners, including students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELLs) to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and produce meaningful work products, yet there are some missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In classrooms, teachers support students with charts with step-by-step expectations. There are depth of knowledge charts and sentence starter charts that students use during class discussions. Anchor charts are also in children's individual folders. During math instruction in an Integrated-Co Teaching classroom, the special education teacher was providing step-by-step instruction to a student showing the relationship between the x and y axis as the student worked toward being able to read and plot points on a coordinate grid.
- Teachers plan flexible groups based on students' need. To further support the groups, an additional staff member pushes into classrooms to provide remediation or enrichment across grades. One student indicated, he receives additional help on Tuesdays' last period with decimals and algebra when the fourth grade teacher comes into his fifth grade class to help since he is having difficulty with math. The supports for reading, writing and math remediation and enrichment vary across classes, therefore not providing intentional extensions for all students.
- This year, the use of Socratic seminar was introduced in third grade and teachers are implementing strategies for genuine discussion. The third grade teachers received professional development on how to design and plan quality questions. As a result, students are engaged in more meaningful student-to-student discussions. In mathematics, students are using accountable talk stems to promote high quality discussions. Examples of the math talking stems includes: This is my solution/strategy, I disagree because, This makes me think. Even though students are engaged in high levels of student thinking and participation across the school, there is inconsistent evidence of student ownership.
- Teachers are utilizing the independent investigation method (IIM) strategies to deepen student inquiry and understanding. In a social studies lesson, students were working in pairs and using laptops, to research different aspects of Italy. They were asked to use the IIM methods of collecting note facts for their assigned topics which included: history, attractions, animals and foods of Italy. Conversely, students in a math lesson were moving from station to station measuring pre-identified objects, limiting high quality extensions for the students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula across grade levels are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate content standards and the instructional shifts. Teachers refine the tasks for subsequent units based on the review of student work and data.

Impact

The school's curricula decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Across grades and content areas, academic tasks push student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has been using Math in Focus for the past two years and this year the teachers modified the curriculum to more effectively meet the needs of their students. Unit plans were developed which include the Common Core Standards, unit focus, big ideas, essential questions technology tools resources, materials, and performance tasks to create a more rigorous, coherent curriculum. A scope and sequence for each grade was also created to accompany the curriculum that is adjusted daily, based on assessing student performance to plan for further instruction. A review of the kindergarten scope and sequence for reading had been clearly marked with the various adjustments that were being made by teachers as the year progressed. Specifically it indicated that students were struggling with sequence of event with letters in kindergarten so the teachers added three days based on student need.
- The assessment data reviewed at the start of the year, revealed that based on the benchmarks, students required more support with English language arts(ELA), specifically with phonics and grammar. The instructional team selected the Foundations Phonics Program to be used as a supplement for students in kindergarten through second grade. And to address the grammar concern, the team decided to use *The Common Core Companion: The Standards Decoded* by Sharon Taberski and Jim Burke, to unpack the standards and identify what the students should be doing and what teachers should be doing. As a result, there is a school-wide focus on grammar. Two days a week the students work on grammar and work on writing pieces the other three days a week, during the writing block. The result has been an improvement in DRA scores from September through February.
- Vocabulary was also identified as a concern, so it became a school-wide focus. A vocabulary project was created school-wide so every student is involved. Each student keeps a vocabulary journal with pictures, definitions, synonyms and antonyms. Pictures are used to support ELLs. This journal is used by all students, not only during the reading period, but also during writing to improve the quality of writing samples. As seen in each of the classrooms visited, vocabulary word walls/bulletin boards were created for students' reference during class.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments across grades and subjects, tracks student progress and consistently checks for understanding.

Impact

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

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers check for understanding through classroom observations and use their clipboard checklist with identified skills to track if a skill was met. Teachers use the information gathered, during their data meetings to make adjustments. Teachers also create and use monitoring for results sheets that are completed at the end of each unit. These results are discussed at the instructional meetings. There are two monitoring for progress forms for each assessment, as observed in use during the teacher team meeting attended. One form is for individual skills and one is for whole class, which is then used for grouping. Teachers stated, 'It helps me to know what students need to know and it is how I create groups based on assessment. I know what we need to focus on now and what the students might have missed. We continue to support the students until the child has mastered the skill.'
- There is school-wide implementation of the utilization of class assessment binders which record daily student performance and also include conference notes used to plan for further instruction. These binders include teacher made conferencing check lists for every unit and reflection sheets for teaching and learning that are completed by both students and teachers at the end of all units in all subjects, The math reflection form from a student included the two things the student learned from the unit, one strategy the student liked using best, one thing the student learned that can be used in the real world and one thing the student still needs help with. The teachers' reflection form for an ELA unit indicated what strategies were used to differentiate, what adjustments can be made to future instruction, information as to the students meeting the expected standards and if the pacing/timing was adequate or if modifications are needed to the curriculum map.
- Portfolios are used school-wide as an overall assessment of each student and are used to help inform future teachers about the child's progress. The portfolio is passed from teacher to teacher as the students move from grade to grade. Portfolios include a grade applicable summary sheet, running records, a writing piece selected by the student which includes pre-writing, draft, revision, editing, published work and rubric score, end of year math assessment, all reading, writing and math conference notes, Scantron assessments and the parent conference summary sheet from their class assessment binder. Conference notes, which are included in the portfolios, show the teachers the feedback that has already been provided to student, enabling them to use that information as they move forward. A kindergarten student's portfolio summary sheet included the dates the child completed his writing pieces that included personal narrative, explanatory/informative and opinion/argument and the score obtained for each of the writing genres.

Findings

School leaders and staff establish a culture for learning through professional development and observational feedback. Teachers have developed a rapport and communicate their expectations with students and families.

Impact

The expectations for learning and success are communicated to the teachers, students and families to ensure that all students are prepared for the next grade level and the future in college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal sets clear expectations of her overall school vision at all faculty meetings/teacher team meetings. An observation schedule was created for the year and twenty-nine of the thirty-five teachers were observed before the end of October. The frequent cycles of classroom visits provide meaningful constructive feedback to improve teacher performance. Follow-up conversations take place with teachers where expectations are discussed. Based on needs identified in observations, inter-visitations are set-up and teachers complete inter-visitation feedback. A teacher, who needed support with improving her use of using questioning and discussion techniques, did several inter-visitations to colleagues. Another teacher indicated that she was sent to another professional development on Orton Gingham and it has helped with her students who are well below grade level. She said, "Now my students are able to sound out and tap out words as a result of the strategies that I am using from the professional development."
- The school implements the Leader in Me program which promotes self-confidence, leadership, responsibility, and goal setting. The students set wildly important goals (WIG) for themselves and monitor them on a monthly basis. As part of the program, the students have goal notebooks and work on developing their character. Leader in Me incorporates college and career readiness practices. In addition, there is a Leadership Academy and these student leaders are responsible for morning announcements, trash busting in the cafeteria during the lunch periods, and helping kindergarten, first and second graders. This initiative builds students' confidence and as a result students are taking more risk in the classrooms. In addition, the entire school has incorporated leadership vocabulary into the vocabulary work they have as a school-wide focus.
- The school has various ways that they support parents to help them understand academic expectations, so they can best support their children in meeting the standards. They send home a parent newsletter before the start of each instructional unit, hold English as a second language parent meetings, have a lending library, hold parent workshops on Common Core Learning Standards, send home monthly progress reports and send parent communication letters. All parents were in agreement that they stay informed through automated phone blasts, the school website, school newsletter, Tuesday parent engagement time, homework notebooks, flyers, curriculum conferences, at the start of school and during parent teacher conferences. Parents stated that they love how the students are recognized and receive awards for leadership and academic achievement or progress and perfect attendance.