



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**P.S. 037R**

**Elementary-Middle-High School R037**

**15 Fairfield Street  
Staten Island  
NY 10308**

**Principal: Florence Gorsky**

**Date of review: February 11-12, 2015**

**Lead Reviewer: Adrienne Edelstein**

## The School Context

P. 037R is a Pre-K to high school with 368 students from Pre-K through grade 12. The school population comprises 14% Black, 27% Hispanic, 53% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.10%.

## 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>Additional Findings</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>Proficient</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff consistently implement highly effective strategies for communicating high expectations and focused feedback to students and families connected to a path to college and career readiness.

### Impact

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

### Supporting Evidence

- The school provides ongoing, clear lines of verbal and written communication with families to deepen their understanding of college and career readiness expectations for their children. This is done via monthly newsletters written and sent home by teachers. In addition, family workers, the parent coordinator and related service providers make outreach to parents to ensure all students' diverse needs are met. This empowers families to help support their children in meeting these expectations. One parent stated: "We always know what our kids are doing and what is coming next".
- Ongoing parent workshops play a significant role in enhancing teacher communication and partnerships with parents. Related service providers conduct monthly workshops to ensure parent involvement in their child's education. Examples of topics include, training on communication devices and Picture Exchange Communication system (PECs), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). Monthly parent activities such as talent, shows, art shows and holiday fairs increase parent involvement leading to improved student outcomes.
- The emphasis on communication and high expectations is clearly evidenced in the "Parent Information at a Glance" newsletter written and distributed by the Parent Coordinator monthly to all families. Curricular updates, calendar events and upcoming workshops listed in the newsletter, promote parent involvement in their child's education. It is evidenced by an 18% increase in parent attendance at monthly workshops. One parent stated: "I feel like I am going to school with my son. I am learning so much".
- The school has achieved measurable results in closing the achievement gap and promoting college and career readiness by increasing student placement across their thirty-three established worksites. Inclusion in the work study program has led to 95% of all graduates being placed in post-secondary employment or a workshop program.
- The staff participates in numerous district and in-house professional development activities. To ensure the entire school community benefits from these sessions, after a staff member attends a PD they send home to parents and distribute to staff information about the topic. One parent in the parent meeting stated: "I now know how to make a "chore sheet" for my daughter at home to give her some independence. This wouldn't have happened if her teacher didn't send home this information".

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Teaching practices reflect the school's core belief system that students learn best when engaged in lessons that are functional, pragmatic, and experiential and differentiated with multiple entry points.

### Impact

Across classrooms, teaching practices consistently support students to produce cognitively appropriate work products, by engaging students in challenging tasks. In many lessons there are some missed opportunities for student to take ownership of their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans in all content areas emphasize a targeted focus on speaking and listening because a large percentage of students are non-verbal or minimally verbal. In a science class for elementary students with multiple disabilities, students responded to questions by pointing to picture symbols, using iPads and augmentative alternative communication (AAC) devices. These functional strategies afforded multiple entry points and engaged all students in the lesson.
- In the majority of classrooms, teachers challenged all students through Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questioning and classroom discussions. For example, in a high school social studies class for students with intellectual disabilities the teacher pushed their thinking by asking them to make a claim and provide evidence from a story about the three branches of government.
- Student work portfolios, classroom bulletin boards and notebooks, show tasks providing multiple entry points and engagement in cognitively challenging activities that develop critical thinking skills. For example, in a kindergarten class, students were learning about transportation and choosing their favorite means of transportation. Verbal students responded orally, explaining the reason for their choice and non-verbal students used communication devices. However, this ownership of learning was not evident in all of the class visits.
- Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses and challenge them accordingly. They identify key areas of support, plan with paraprofessionals and speech therapists and strategically adjust their instruction to provide students with multiple ways to show their thinking and learning.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and teachers align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), integrate the instructional shifts and consistently utilize multiple resources to emphasize rigor in their learning tasks.

### Impact

The school's curricula decisions build coherence and promote student independence, academic achievement and career readiness skills for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's participation in the District 75 Universal Design for Learning (UDL) task force, trained teachers on how to provide multiple entry points for all students. For example, all classes visited were focusing on the word "help". Students were exposed to the word through the use AACs and PECs. This results in increased learning opportunities for all students as evidenced by an 81% increase in mastering specific communication skills on the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI).
- Planning and refining is evident in the revised curricula maps organized by grade bands, academic content area and social skills development. The map provides evidence that the school develops rigorous tasks through the adaptation of instructional programs from Attainment Math, Essentials for Living, and New York State Career development and Occupational Studies to promote college and career readiness.
- Lessons and academic tasks include the integration of the instructional shifts across subject areas. For example, In English language arts, lesson plans reflect strategies to build academic vocabulary, including the use of word walls across subjects. Student work posted on bulletin boards reflects higher order tasks requiring problem solving, creativity and test-based writing products.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. All teachers use common assessments and a common grading policy to determine student progress towards goals and to adjust curricula and instruction.

### **Impact**

The creation and use of assessments and rubrics by all teachers allows for ongoing analysis of student performance and adjustment to classroom practices that improves student performance and demonstrates increased student mastery.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school's instructional focus, as articulated by all teachers and administrators, centers on deepening the knowledge of students through planning and analysis of assessments. This work has led to increased focus on the design of tasks and teaching strategies, such as inclusion of speech providers in the classroom to increase communication skills. Evidence of this was observed in the end of unit assessment in one classroom, which assessed content area and communication skill growth.
- Teachers use pre and post-assessments for all subject areas that are aligned to the school's curricula. In addition, teachers gather a variety of formative and summative data through the use of SANDI, Functional Analysis Screening Tool (FAST), Fountas and Pinell, Individual Education Plan (IEP) goal mastery and Level 1 vocational assessments to assist them in adjusting lessons to improve student outcomes.
- A variety of meaningful feedback is given to students at the conclusion of each lesson. Feedback is timely and given in various forms due to each student's receptive and cognitive understanding. For example, during classroom visits, feedback was observed verbally, by way of social praising (high fives), by the use of tangibles (stickers, reinforcers, tokens) and written feedback with next steps.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The vast majority of teachers are systematically engaged in structured collaborative inquiry-based professional teacher teams. Embedded leadership structures encourage teachers' voice in key decisions from planning curricula to improving practices.

### Impact

Professional collaborations continuously strengthen teacher practice ensuring a shared commitment to attaining school goals and resulting in increased student progress. Furthermore, teachers adjust practices to ensure student mastery in all subject areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has a structured and well defined schedule of regular professional collaborations that promote teacher leadership in which all teachers meet at least twice a week. Teams use multiple sources of data, including student work, SANDI baseline and end of year assessments, teacher created Ela and math assessments to understand trends across the school, grade, classes and individual students. Curriculum maps, Units of Study and lesson plans demonstrate planning aligned to the CCLS and highlight the instructional shifts. Evidence of this work is seen in the identification of a common skill for each student and the differentiation based on the students' cognitive ability.
- During weekly team meetings, teachers participate in lesson study analysis of student work, performance and progress outcomes with the goal of understanding the impact of teaching strategies on student learning. Each month the teams have a different focus, studying targeted groups of students to gain understanding of strategies that are successful and expand practices to impact students across the school. For example, one team is focusing on the UDL word of the month "help". The team is developing protocols as well as embedding enrichment activities into all units of study that incorporate ways to teach "help" to support the continual progress of students in a 12:1:4 class ratio.
- Teachers plan together and share reflections on students' learning to identify gaps in students' acquisition of skills taught. During the common ratio meeting, teachers confirm that they have total freedom over decisions about their craft. Structures are in place for team leaders to meet regularly with administration to share agendas, findings and next steps.
- During the team meetings each teacher articulates how they will apply the suggestion or strategy that was discussed at the meeting and then feedback is provided at the following meeting, discussing the impact on student performance. For example, at a 12:1:4 team meeting, one teacher presented a symbol for "help" that she created and how through the use of the symbol, the student, with assistance, was able to complete a writing task with accuracy.
- Teachers take on leadership roles, such as instructional coach, data specialist and team leaders. The administration meets with the instructional cabinet to follow-up on the work of the teams. Teachers state: "The principal and assistant principals are 100% in favor of any instructional decision we make that will benefit the students".