

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 038 George Cromwell

Elementary R038

**421 Lincoln Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10306**

Principal: Everlidys Robles

**Dates of review: March 31, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cynthia Dickman**

The School Context

P.S. 038 George Cromwell is an elementary school with 370 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 33% Hispanic, 55% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-15 was 93.5%.

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	Additional Findings	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.	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	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 grade level teams for collaborative planning and analyzing student work 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

As a result of collaborative planning and teacher voice in curriculum and professional development, there is an increase in teachers' instructional capacity. The distributive leadership structures promote shared leadership focusing on improved student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal created a school schedule where teacher teams have common prep periods, across every grade at least 4 times per week. This time is used for planning, looking at student work, preparing materials and resources and articulation. The teams provide reflections about student progress and then the principal sits with each team to look at patterns, trends and the next steps planned and provide feedback. The discussions are about the noticings and how the teachers are getting students to move so they can tackle the work. As a result of these reflections and conversations, boot camps are created. The boot camp is designed for a targeted group of students. It includes guided work every day until the students develop skills to help them move forward. Then the teams go back to review the data and make adjustments again.
- The school's instructional team meets four times per year and discusses and creates the school-wide professional development plan. The grade meetings, inquiry time and professional development sessions are then built from those instructional team meetings. The professional development plan is a living document based on the teachers' needs. Taking into account the new teachers as well as the experience teachers, the professional development plan that was created for the fall included: expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), school policies and procedures, classroom environments, coding of running records, unpacking individualized education plans (IEPs), Response to Intervention (RtI), supporting the work of related service personnel, the writing continuum, conferencing, use of historical artifacts and the use of technology.
- The school is building capacity through the vertical teams and the principal has stated that the staff has improved as teachers of writing. Vertical teams have been working with consultant, Carl Anderson. The focus of the work was having the vertical team members look at the writing progressions. The teachers had to review their students' writing. The teachers' instructional capacity has improved as they were looking deeper at the work and discussing the structure and conventions of the students' writing instead of at the minor details such as spelling.
- Through the principal's distributive leadership a staff member was empowered to develop a school-wide technology initiative. Based on the technology needs of the staff, a technology action plan and supporting professional development was developed. The plan included using the SMART board, creating teacher presentations, enhancing instruction for visual and kinesthetic learners, use of E-Chalk and using a variety of technology tools in the classroom. Teachers volunteered to present some of the topics during professional development time on Mondays, which began in January. As a result, there has been an increase in technology being utilized within the classroom and students have begun to create their own power point presentations.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While common assessments are being utilized to identify student progress toward goals and teachers are using checks for understanding and student self-assessment, teachers inconsistently utilize rubrics to provide actionable feedback to students.

Impact

Teachers are using their summative and formative assessment analysis to make effective adjustments to the curriculum and instruction to meet all student learning needs. However, teachers provided limited feedback to students regarding their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- 'Writing on demand' are done across all grades, four times per year. The school targets the lowest one third of the students and monitors the data of these identified children all year. The teachers are required to analyze the student's growth after each of the 'on demand' writing pieces and then the principal, assistant principal and individualized education plan (IEP) teacher review to see if there is growth over time and examine the teachers' analysis. Feedback is then provided to the teacher. Of the 42 students targeted from September to March this year, progress monitoring shows that in September, 72% were at level one and 26% were at level two. In March, 17% were at level one, 64% were at level 2 and 19% were at level three.
- The school believes that the lower grades are the foundational grades; therefore, specifically targets these students. Using the beginning of year measures of student learning data and June data from last year, the AM Tutorial Program was created. The program ran from October through January, three days a week for one hour on each day. Twenty-three students, identified as the lowest one third of students in kindergarten, first and second grade participated. These identified students were showing academic delays in pre-reading and reading skills. Assessments conducted at the start and end of the program included Letter Identification Assessment, Spelling Inventory, High Frequency Word Assessment and Running Records. Based on a review of the running record levels of the 17 kindergarten and first graders who were part of the AM Tutorial Program, they all made progress and 59% of them moved up at least two or more reading levels.
- Upper grade children use their own rubrics. Rubrics are used in the lower grades with whole class and not individual children. The principal indicated the school is working on moving toward using rubrics for students in the lower grades and not just with the whole class. A lower grade teacher indicated that using the rubric to provide students with next steps is what they will be working on next. In some upper grade classrooms there was rubrics with actionable student feedback displayed and in other classrooms there were no rubrics or actionable student feedback displayed. For example, actionable feedback in one classroom read, "You have supported your thesis. Next time, include more information to support your ideas from another source." Conversely, the non-actionable feedback in another classroom read, "Nice work."
- Children reflect and do their own self-assessments. They have checklists to use at the end of the unit. They are partnered together by the teacher to assess their own work and asked to try to improve it as best they can. The teachers stated that it empowers the students to make decisions for themselves, it gives the students ownership of their own work and allows them to take risks. The students stated that they can always make their work better and this is preparing them for college and career.
- Teachers are using the checks for understanding and students' self-assessment to adjust their small group instruction. Based on the information gathered, teachers asked if additional instructional time for math could be provided. Teachers now plan three extra periods per week for the small group instruction. Students are making progress as a result of this additional small group instructional time. The data of a comparison of the Go Math Assessment results from September to January show an increase of student scoring at level four in all grade levels, except in second grade where there are now no students scoring a level one and all are scoring at level two or three. ,

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school has aligned their curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) across content areas and integrates the instructional shifts. Academic tasks and units of study are planned and refined using student work.

Impact

Students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD) have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged. The school's decisions lead to instructional coherence that promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school crafts their own reading and writing curriculum that is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) and the instructional shifts. The principal stated that the school's partnership with Teachers College has contributed tremendously to the instructional quality of the school and has contributed to the professional growth of pedagogy and classroom practice. She also stated that the units of study and curricula maps are aligned to the vision of the standards of what it means to be a literate person in the 21st century and in the classrooms students are taught strategies and skills that they can then use independently in the world around them.
- Last year the school began using the Go Math curriculum resource. At the end of the year, the teachers determined that the units needed to be modified so they would better meet the needs of the students in their classrooms. Subsequently, this year changes were made to the pacing within each grade and a differentiation plan was created for the whole group, small group and enrichment. As a result, what is being taught is now better aligned with the assessments the students take. Teachers can better anticipate the challenges students will face and can embed the work to address those challenges within the class work, small group work, and homework.
- This year a change was made in the writing curriculum to integrate social studies. A local historian was consulted to enhance the social studies work. The historian shared primary resources, and as a result, the students' social studies writing work in third, fourth and fifth grades is deeper and richer. Work is still being done in kindergarten, first and second grade to enrich the social studies content knowledge. Debates and argumentation in classrooms are now more powerful. A higher level of thinking is being promoted across the board as evidenced in the student work. Fifth grade students wrote an opinion piece on whether or not zoos should be banned and the high level of thinking and argumentation was evident in the student's writing.
- June planning is of great importance to the school's curriculum. A grant for funding to support the work was received and the school's partnership with the Staten Island Foundation helps the school to be able to fund this initiative. The teachers on the grade 3 teacher team indicated that they use their reflections from throughout the year to make changes for the following year as they did this year with the mathematics curriculum to ensure the tasks and units of study are planned to best meet the needs of all of their students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD). They further stated that the principal creates dedicated time in June, where substitute teachers are secured so that teachers can meet in grade level teams to accomplish this important curricula planning.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT). Teachers are providing supports and scaffolds to meet the needs of all students.

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.

Supporting Evidence

- The school believes all children can learn and because they have different modalities and learning styles, the staff has to modify the content to meet their students' needs. The teachers do not want the students to feel frustrated in the classroom. The principal indicated that it is important that we know where we need to go with any particular child. For example, at the start of the year there were some kindergarten students who had sensory issues and could not hold a pencil or crayon. The teachers watched the difficulty the students were experiencing and created a plan to have them hold crayon or hold pencil.
- Teaching strategies included grouping students and utilizing tiered graphic organizers and/or tasks which provide multiple entry points for all learners. In a third grade class, the students were engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and were producing meaningful work products. Some students were working with the teacher on the big idea or identifying the central message of a story that the writer wanted to share with the readers. Others were working with a part-time teacher and using a graphic organizer to recount a fable and the remaining students were involved in four different center activities. The video center required the students to write an answer to the question, "What are two ways you can have a healthy life?" with a short response using details from the video. A student in this center was working on his response and indicated with details from the video as to why it is important to have eight glasses of water a day to have a healthy lifestyle.
- Teachers provide the students with different graphic organizers to chart their responses based on the student levels previously identified. This was observed in a class where children had different graphic organizers to chart the author's purpose. In another class, students had individual supports, based on their needs, which were adhered to their desks. One example included a reminder for the student to use capital letters when using the word I, referring to a name or place and when indicating the day and month. An example in another class reminded the student of the acronym SCOPE, indicating S is for setting, C is for character, O is for order of events, P is for problem and E is for ending or solution.

Findings

School leaders establish a culture for learning that conveys high expectations to all staff. Teachers and school leaders communicate these expectations to the students and families connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback.

Impact

School leaders communicate their high expectations and have a system of accountability for those expectations. Feedback to families helps them understand student progress toward high expectations for their students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's motto, "Believing in Children", is woven throughout the school day. The principal and assistant principal hold staff accountable through professional development, teacher team work, observations and walkthroughs. Teachers communicate their high expectations to the students and families through the progress reports, monthly newsletters, students' planners, the school's website, emails, phone calls and workshops to ensure that all students are prepared for the next grade level.
- There is an understanding that school is a community of learners. The principal sends out a morning message every day with reminders to the staff. Examples of the reminders include upcoming expectations for Socratic seminar, student report cards, parent engagement time, parent workshops, measures of student learning (MOSL) assessments, and performance tasks. The principal conducts walkthroughs and is constantly in classrooms providing feedback. She provides glows and grows from the walkthroughs and holds mid-year conversations with teachers. Grade data meetings also take place where there are additional conversations about the expectations. The principal stated she constantly is engaging teachers in conversations about the expectations of the school community.
- Teachers create monthly newsletters which are sent home to parents, keeping them informed of the school's high expectations. For example, the "Third Grade March Newsletter" included upcoming important dates regarding the English language arts and Math state assessments and New York State English as a Second Language Test as well as academic news about the reading, writing and mathematics curriculum expectations for the students.
- The school created parents as learning partners where parents are invited to sit in their child's classroom as a learning partner. Sessions are set up for one period, 8:35 a.m. to 9:20 a.m. on one Thursday morning each month. Letters are sent home to the parents ahead of the session, indicating the focus of each session. At the end of the session, parents are invited to participate in a debriefing session where their observations are discussed. This partnership with the school and parents allows the parents to be involved in the teaching and learning of their children. Parents stated they really enjoy being able to participate in the classroom learning and get a better understand of what their children are doing. Students stated they enjoy having their parents visit their classroom to see what they are doing in school.
- As a result of the third, fourth and fifth grade instructional practices of essay writing, speech making and argumentation and debates, there is a different level of thinking for students. Students said they feel they are better readers now and can go into text and pull information out of it. They also said they are going on to middle school, high school and college and they have this base to take with them. Parents stated they are amazed at their child's writing and foundation that will make them successful.