



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 39 Francis J. Murphy Jr.

Elementary School R039

**71 Sand Lane
Staten Island
NY 10305**

Principal: Tracey Wright

**Dates of review: May 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cynthia Dickman**

The School Context

P.S. 39 Francis J. Murphy Jr. is an Elementary school with 547 students from PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 32% Hispanic, 47% White, and 15% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 92.8%.

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	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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations and vested in increasing school-wide coherence and student achievement. Teachers take on leadership roles and are integral in key decisions that affect student learning.

Impact

As a result, there is an increase in teacher capacity and teachers take ownership towards improved achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal created a schedule where teachers meet in a variety of team configurations including inquiry, grade and data meetings. As part of inquiry, teachers and paraprofessionals work with their grade team to analyze student work and plan instruction. They share findings, generate teaching points and plan strategic supports to meet students' needs. In addition to the team meetings, each grade has two common preparation periods weekly to meet and share strategies for instruction. The data team also meets weekly to gather and organize classroom data and then share through Google docs for planning needs based learning. The school's most recent New York City school survey indicates that 90% of the teachers agree that working together on teams improves their instructional practice.
- The first grade's inquiry team meeting was focused on preparing to teach addition and subtraction from one to forty to their first grade students. The team used the protocol for examining data to analyze the student math data for the post-test on numbers from one to twenty from the previous unit. They also reviewed the pre-test on the unit and reviewed the article *What Makes a Good Test* by Rachel Nobel. The teachers used the data from analyzing student work to plan instructional strategies for their struggling students, advanced students, students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Distributive leadership practices are the result of the school's belief that by including everyone in the shared decision making process they are a community where learning is taking place for all community members. The vertical team meets monthly to review trends in school-wide data across the grades. Representatives from each grade level, cluster teachers and paraprofessionals share the areas of need from the staff they represent and plan professional development opportunities to address these needs. One Monday per month is designated as a menu choice day in which teachers conduct sessions, sharing their area of expertise or best practice. The school provides multiple opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge and expertise while learning and growing alongside other professionals. Teacher team members stated, "There is real teacher collaboration, we volunteer to support our peers and work together very well."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the school's curriculum and embed the instructional shifts, though high quality supports and extensions are not yet consistently evident.

Impact

As a result, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation though there are inconsistent opportunities for student ownership and targeted progress is hindered for some students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use different methodologies of pedagogy to ensure all students are engaged in learning. In reading and writing, the mini-lesson workshop model is used and lesson components include teach, active engagement, practice, scaffolds, share and assessment. This includes: I do, we do, and you do. Math lessons stretch out the gradual release model over the course of each chapter with direct instruction, hands-on exploration/guided practice, independent practice, reteach and enrichment. Based on observation feedback, 78% of the teachers are effective and highly effective at engaging students in learning.
- Across classrooms, teachers utilize a variety of strategies such as charts, videos and small group activities to provide multiple entry points to support all learners. In a third grade reciprocal reading activity, groups were differentiated as evidenced by the levels of text for each group. Text at levels K, M and P were utilized for students to engage in discussion, ask clarifying questions, summarize and complete reciprocal reading documents. This strategy allows the students to extend their thinking as they make their thinking visible, provide evidence for answers from the text and exchange and build on their classmates' ideas.
- Socratic seminar is utilized in second through fifth grade to support questioning and discussion. During a third grade reading lesson, students had full ownership of their learning. The teacher was facilitating higher level thinking skills by implementing strategies to support students in leading the conversations. This included asking students to support their opinion using text evidence and having the students engage in genuine conversations as they ask their classmates relevant questions. Conversely, during a social studies lesson in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom students did not have the opportunity to take ownership of their learning as the teacher asked whole class questions which were answered student-to-teacher with no extensions for student-to-student discussions. Even though students are engaged in high levels of student thinking and participation, evidence of student ownership was inconsistent across the classrooms visited.
- During a math lesson in a fourth grade (ICT) classroom, the teachers utilized tiered tasks for students to complete multi-step word problems during their independent practice. The special education teacher was providing one-to one support by reminding the student to underline identify key information in the question and then they worked together using manipulatives to solve the problem. Conversely, during a science class in second grade, students were working in teams to complete an experiment and the teacher was circulating, yet not all students were challenged to push their thinking to the next level.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula across grade levels are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and tasks are planned to ensure that higher-order thinking skills and rigorous habits are emphasized for all students, though refinement using student work and data for groups of students was not yet evident across all subjects.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions create coherency across all grades and subjects and promote college and career readiness for all students. In certain subjects, curricula and tasks provide students with varied levels of access, limiting their ability to demonstrate critical thinking and cognitive engagement in all lessons.

Supporting Evidence

- The school infuses Emotional Intelligence and Steven Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* into the curriculum, across all the grades, so students are engaged in tasks that connect social, emotional and academic skills, to prepare them for college and career. In a reading lesson observed in a third grade classroom, students had to apply their knowledge of habit number 6, synergize, to determine how the main character in the book, *The Extra Good Sunday from Ramona Quimby*, by Beverly Cleary, solved her problem. Students expressed that all the work they do in school helps them to set goals for themselves and helps build their self-confidence, leadership abilities and responsibility to themselves and others.
- The school's curriculum maps were designed to promote higher-order thinking and include the Common Core Learning Standard expectations, essential questions, mentor texts, protocols for engagement, learning projects, opportunities for extension leanings, checks for understanding and assessments, resources, real life connections and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) integration. The writing and math curriculum units include differentiation so that students at the basic and advanced levels as well as English language learners and students with disabilities have access, but this refinement for groups of students was not evident across all subjects.
- Teachers meet and review curriculum maps and develop a plan to modify curriculum. This year the school decided to change their writing curricula and identified six units of study for the year and then realigned the Journey's reading program to match their writing units of study. This was done to provide students with greater opportunities to understand the various genres they would study. In addition, the revised curriculum maps for writing included the instruction of conclusions for kindergarten and first grade to address the gap the teachers identified and build the competencies and stamina needed for the demands of second through fifth grades. The teachers have also identified that there is a weakness in the phonics component of their Journeys reading program so they are working together to review resources from various vendors and will select the supplemental materials that best meets their students' needs.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Through the use of common assessments, teachers' assessment practices measure student progress across grades and subjects. Teachers consistently use checks for understanding, peer assessments and student self-assessment to measure student mastery.

Impact

As a result, teachers make adjustments to curriculum and instruction so that students demonstrate increased achievement. Tracking systems are in place to ensure student progress and identify next steps resulting in an increase in student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- The school staff disaggregates test data, looking at the trends and patterns from multiple sources including the state assessments and assessments that are provided from the Journey's reading program, Math in Focus program and Teachers College units of study for writing. Each classroom teacher and grade has identified assessments that align to the intended outcome for each unit or theme in reading, writing and math. Each unit has a pre-assessment that provides a baseline for teachers to use to guide their instruction. The results of the pre-assessments are analyzed and teachers identify the patterns and trends from the data and plan whole group and small group instruction accordingly.
- Kindergarten, first and second grade teachers shared that their students had difficulty with conclusions in writing. They also discovered that instruction for conclusions wasn't expected or provided for kindergarten and first graders. From this conversation, kindergarten and first grade teachers are creating targeted lessons to teach students how to develop conclusions so they are prepared for second grade. As a result, student mastery in writing conclusions has increased by 50% from September through May.
- Progress monitoring is done within each lesson. Teachers monitor for understanding in each lesson through questioning and discussion and exit slips. At the start of the lesson, teachers use questions to review from the previous day. Teachers also confer with students and monitor skills and/or strategies that have been taught to see if they mastered them. If these skills/strategies are not mastered, students are provided with next steps and individual guidance or direction in order to master and are allowed time for additional practice. Conference notes, with a compliment and next steps are indicated for each specific meeting with the students, are kept in data binders that each teacher maintains to monitor growth. The data binders also house data checklists as well as pre- and post-tests information for every subject and unit.
- Students are empowered to self-assess through checklists and rubrics during guided and independent practice and conferencing. Students use thumbs up, thumbs down, thumbs sideways and questioning and white boards. In guided practice, they use a rubric to describe their level of understanding indicating if they understand it and can do it on their own, if they are beginning to understand and if they are just starting to learn and still need some help. During independent practice they determine if they are an expert, practitioner, apprentice or novice and rate themselves on the rubric, indicating why they selected that level.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and teachers engage in high-quality collaborative learning opportunities establishing a culture of professionalism. The school effectively partners with families, fostering their participation in the balance of academic and enrichment activities, with ongoing feedback.

Impact

The staff takes ownership of their professional growth and there is a culture of mutual accountability. Students successfully achieve expectations and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The administrative team conducts observations and snapshot visits and provides actionable feedback using the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT). To support teacher practice, the professional development is centered on the school-wide instructional focus of questioning and discussion. Anchor charts and table prompts with question stems to help deepen student discussions, resulting from the professional development, were evident in all classrooms visited. Observation feedback indicates that there has been an improvement in the use of higher-order questioning across classrooms.
- It is the school's belief that by including everyone in the decision making process they facilitate learning for all community members. The vertical professional development team meets monthly to review trends in school-wide data across the grades. Representatives from each grade level, cluster teachers and paraprofessionals share the areas of need from the staff they represent. The team then plans professional development opportunities to address these needs. The professional development cycle designates one Monday per month as a menu choice day in which teachers conduct sessions sharing their area of expertise or best practice. The school provides multiple opportunities for teachers to share their knowledge while learning and growing alongside other professionals.
- Parents are kept well-informed of their children's progress and regularly receive communication from the school. Parents receive a goal sheet at the start of the year and also attend open house sessions on curriculum and expectations. Parents indicated the school maintains ongoing communication with them through the website, student planners, homework schedule, personal phone calls, automated calling system, Tuesday parent engagement time, publishing parties, newsletters that go home monthly from each grade, Class DoJo, School Leadership Team Meetings, and Parent Teacher Association meetings. Parents receive assessment student update reports four times a year and rubrics prior to the start of each unit. Students shared that during parent teacher conferences, they are able to lead the conferences with their parents.
- Families have many opportunities to partner with the school community. Pre-kindergarten families visit a kindergarten class at the end of year before moving on to kindergarten. In June, parents receive a packet of student expectations for the next school year and a list of things to do to prepare their children. As students transition to middle school, the staff holds meetings to discuss the process and timeline. Fifth grade parents are encouraged to attend the middle school fair and receive help with the middle school application. Parents stated, "Communication and parent activities are the strengths of the school." Another parent said, "The parent and family activities for the school are wonderful. I enjoyed the game night, bedtime story night and the Mother's Day breakfast."