



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Thomas C. Brown

Elementary School R044

**80 Maple Parkway
Staten Island
NY 10303**

Principal: Joseph Miller

**Date of review: March 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

The School Context

Thomas C. Brown is an elementary school with 942 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 42% Black, 51% Hispanic, 2% White, 2% Asian students, and 3% other students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.0%.

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	Developing
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	Developing
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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leadership utilizes a variety of sources to communicate expectations to school staff through training and ensures that ongoing feedback to parents on student progress is consistent.

Impact

Systems of accountability ensure that staff members are aware of the school's expectations and foster this understanding to articulate next steps to parents towards college and career readiness for students.

Supporting Evidence

- School-wide memoranda, a faculty handbook, and emails provide staff with clear expectations on teaching and learning. For example, in the handbook, administrative memo #23 provides teachers with information on the classroom environment, use of instructional materials, lesson planning, and the assessment policy. For learning environment, it states, "Every classroom must be bright, clutter free, and literature rich." Across the school, classrooms reflected this expectation.
- Feedback from observations conveys strengths and areas of focus for teachers to use in crafting next steps. For example, as reflected in several evaluator observation feedback reports, the administration emphasizes feedback on questioning and discussion in literacy. This is in alignment with the school's instructional focus. Training opportunities are provided to support teachers around the instructional focus and the Danielson Framework for Teaching including network workshops and school-wide professional development. As a result, there is an increase in improvement in the area of questioning as evident in observation feedback reports.
- The school provides parents with information on upcoming events, including insight into Common Core Learning Standards. Parents interviewed stated that teachers call home and use a texting and messaging tool to provide them with information on how their children are performing in school. Monthly workshops in literacy and math provide parents with expectations for reading and writing related to the Common Core Learning Standards. Parent engagement time provide families information with how students are performing in school and what they can do at home to help their child. For example, one parent stated that the teacher provided her with her child's reading level, informed her where her daughter needed to be at that point of the year, and suggested strategies and materials to use at home.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Although teachers are beginning to incorporate tasks and classroom discussions that require higher-order thinking, such tasks and discussions were uneven across classrooms. Teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Work products and discussions across classrooms reflect uneven participation and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In one English language arts class, the teacher posed questions to encourage students to explain their thinking using supportive text evidence to compare and contrast their ideas about characters. However, this type of practice was not evident across classes. For instance, in another class, with the same learning objective, the teacher accepted one word answers and simple sentences such as “He was a good friend,” and “He was a mean friend,” without requiring students to explain their thinking and/or use textual evidence to support their conclusions.
- In some classes, scaffolds were provided to groups of students to engage students in higher order thinking. For example, in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were grouped by modality and the teachers used two different approaches to support students understanding of improper fractions. However, similar practices were not evident across classes. For example, in a third grade science class experiment, the teacher asked students to determine how objects move and to use data charts to record and explain their findings. Although the teacher gave students clay and string to help students visualize actions to respond to the prompt with evidence, students appeared confused as to how use these materials. Students offered conclusions that were not related to the tasks of the experiment and the concept of movement.
- School-wide, discussions were mostly teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher. In a fifth grade English language arts (ELA) class, the teacher posed Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Level 2 and 3 questions, “What do you learn about Dr. Reeper in Chapter 6?” and “What details in the text support your impression of Dr. Reeper?” Students responded directly to the teacher, whereupon the teacher asked the next question and waited for a student to volunteer an answer. Classmates observed silently. In a fourth grade interdisciplinary ELA/science lesson, the teacher posed several recall and low-level inference questions to students such as, “Why did the author write about earthquakes?” and “What happens in Japan?” whereupon students responded directly to the teacher.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts. Teachers use student work and data to refine tasks.

Impact

Across grades and subject areas, written curricula and academic tasks demonstrate coherence, rigor, and planning for a diversity of learners to build higher-order skills and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses ReadyGen and GoMath from grades kindergarten to 5, curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. A review of pacing calendars indicates that the school integrates fiction and nonfiction into the English language arts (ELA) curriculum. For example, the planning scope for grade 5 reflects both narrative and expository units throughout the year. A review of curricula maps reflects similarities in the use of Instructional Shift #1 Balancing Informational and Literary Text with an emphasis on combining narrative and expository text. The professional development calendar indicates teachers receive ongoing training through the year on ReadyGen and Go Math.
- Additionally, to support the Dual Language program, the teacher team reported that they use planning periods to vertically align the English language arts curriculum and make adjustments to the strategies. In review of several tasks and maps including those in the Dual Language program, plans to support the use of text based evidence and complexity was evident. For example, a fifth grade ELA plan and instructional chart included close reading and rigorous prompts for students to reread and discuss the text such as, “Do you trust George’s characterization of his teacher?”
- Teacher teams review student work products and data across subjects and refine tasks based on students’ ability level. For example, in writing, one lesson plan included tier tasks for low, medium, and high level students with projects ranging from the development of a video for higher achievers and the creation of a “How To” book for others. This refinement was made after a review of the original curricula and student responses to assessments. In addition, another lesson plan demonstrated planning for ability-based groups with tasks ranging from the development of figurative language for higher-level students to a concentration on word phrasing for others.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Structured professional inquiry based collaborations aligned to school goals offer opportunities for teachers’ professional growth and input on instructional decisions

Impact

Increased teacher capacity and decision making fosters stronger pedagogical practices, team building, and teacher input into curricula decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including agendas, the use of a protocol called Collaborative Assessment Conference (CAC) and template, to support progress. The administration and teams of teachers reported that the focus of these meetings encompasses an integration of the school goals with the Five Pillars of Reading Instruction (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension), Common Core Learning Standards, differentiation for groups of students, and flexible grouping, as well as the improvement of curricula reflected in lesson plans.
- During a team meeting, teachers referred to student work and used a CAC reflection protocol for sharing instructional strategies to support Common Core writing standards that demand clear and coherent writing and use of valid reasoning and substantiation of evidence. As a next step, the team offered the presenting teacher suggestions to improve the quality of student writing through use of the RACE acronym (Restate, Answer, Cite, Evidence). Another strategy recommended was the “silent conversation,” in which student partners evaluate each other’s work, that one teacher stated has improved the quality of written responses in her class. The strategies presented aligned to the school’s instructional focus to support students toward achievement of ELA standards.
- Teacher teams are supported by assistant principals to make instructional decisions for altering curricula materials throughout the year. For example, teachers reported that they made changes to the pacing calendar in the GoMath program for Kindergarten based on students’ results in geometry. In addition, the Dual Language team made the decision to conduct inter-visitations among each other’s classes to ensure their instructional approaches were aligned in terms of the structure of the program and entry points used. Strategies such as the Frayer Model, a vocabulary scaffold, were integrated into the school-wide curriculum as a result of the Dual Language visits.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Although there are school wide assessments, including rubrics, all related to the curricula, they are not always closely aligned to defined curricula outcomes. Practices to help students understand feedback based on ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment practices are uneven.

Impact

The use of assessments does not yet lead to actionable next steps so that students know what they need to do to improve. Limited in-the-moment adjustments to instruction preclude meeting all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- During the student interview, some students were able to refer to writing rubric and their teacher's feedback on for focus, based on how they were graded. For example, one student stated that he was "good at conventions," but needed "to work on all the other areas". Another student stated, "I need to use more text evidence." However, a review of student responses using rubrics, and work products, indicated that several students were not able to articulate accurate next steps. For example, during the interview, when asked what the next steps were two students needed help reading their teachers' comments.
- During classroom visits, teachers were conducting conferences and used questioning strategies to obtain information on student understanding. In addition some evidence of self-assessment was evident in two classes. For example, in a fifth grade Integrated ICT math class, the teacher conducted a "silent conversation" task with her class by having students review their partner's word problems and provide feedback to them. Several students wrote on post its comments such as, "Show your work." and "I like how you showed your word problem." Both teachers walked around noting student comments and asked certain students to share out. Based on a review of responses, the teacher reviewed the idea of showing your thinking by using an exemplar with the students. However, across several other classes, adjustments to instruction were limited to coaching prompts and lesson concepts were not revisited.
- A review of student work products shows that rubrics are used to grade student work across subject areas. However, detailed written feedback evident in ELA was not evident in other subject areas. For example, in reviewing science tasks on bulletin boards, the sole written comment on a student piece of work was "Whoo hoo". Additionally, in math, the majority of student work reflected grades only.