



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

John C. Thompson

Elementary School 052

**450 Buel Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10305**

Principal: Jane McCord

**Date of review: January 15, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

The School Context

John C. Thompson is an elementary school with 498 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 17% Hispanic, 71% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

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	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Structures and systems are in place to consistently communicate high expectations to staff and to provide feedback to set meaningful partnerships with families around supporting students towards expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

School wide systems of mutual accountability and effective partnerships with families are resulting in meeting expectations in teaching and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Handbooks, emails, and school memoranda provide clear expectations of instructional expectations. Snapshot teams, comprised of teacher leaders, seek evidence of proficient school practices through school wide classroom intervisitations relative to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) competencies and Quality Review indicators. Feedback from team visits is provided to individual teachers and informs school wide professional development. For example, as indicated in the school professional development plans, an area of support based on the Snapshot team review was improving the quality of rigor across classrooms as indicated in Quality Review indicators 1.1 and 1.2. Information was presented during a Monday professional development workshop. Additionally, as indicated in the professional development plan, teachers meet individually during Monday meetings to discuss findings of selected teachers visited and present feedback to improve their practices. During an interview, one teacher stated, “Last year I wasn’t good at assessment and so I became part of the snapshot team and was placed in the assessment team. I was able to learn more, seeing students in motion and made the work more realistic. I learned to use data more in my class.” The teacher provided an example of how using data helped her class improve the quality of their writing and “help them make more connections.”
- Teachers worked collaboratively to develop a Grade Expectations chart for English language arts (ELA) and math, based on assessment data from New York State and school examinations, which identifies end-of-year benchmarks, areas of strengths and grade level foci for students. – A review of the foci by school wide vertical teams provided a snapshot of student trends grade-to-grade with accompanying next steps. For example, areas of foci shared with second grade included locating text evidence and writing structure in ELA and in math, number sense, and writing explanations of solutions in word problems. Furthermore, the principal has connected with principals from other schools to arrange middle school teacher visits from sixth grade to meet with fifth grade teachers to share findings of student performance.
- Family workshops, grade newsletters, resources provided by the school, parent English as a Second Language classes, and progress reports indicating student goals, all provide multiple means of feedback and an awareness of practices towards preparing students for college and career. During an interview, parents were able to explain ways the structures informed them of their children’s progress and how the school is preparing them to help support their children at home. For example, one parent stated she attended the math workshop where, “they gave us a lesson using the same books my daughter used in class.” She stated when her daughter had trouble with decimals; she was able to reteach her.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices provide strategies to serve as entry points for challenging tasks and student discussion.

Impact

Tasks, work products, and classroom discussions, engage students in demonstrating higher-order thinking and participation, yet do not lead to student ownership and high-leveled extensions for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- In several classrooms, teachers engaged students in challenging work which required reasoning and thought. However, in some classrooms, supports were limited and some students were not challenged. In one English language arts class, a few students were struggling with the task. Although the teacher provided graphic organizers to support students' thinking, the scaffold did not provide sufficient support to ensure their understanding of how to answer the question correctly and complete the task properly. Additionally, there was no teacher redirection and groups of students were unclear, leading to their difficulty in meeting the lesson's objective.
- During a social studies debate, students were involved in a Socratic Seminar and asked to determine which civilization made the greatest contribution. Students presented and argued their point of view while other students provided counterclaims towards those statements. For example, one student stated, "To exercise my opinion, I personally feel that the Mayans contributed to the civilization as they never stopped learning and came up with the principal of zero." A student introduced and facilitated the activity. The teacher supported students by prompting them to keep good eye contact and took notes throughout the activity. Other students were seated with a rubric and assigned as a peer-observer, to assess and provide feedback on performance. However, this level of student ownership and independence in task work was only evident in some classrooms.
- During a science lesson, students were provided with a task card and materials for completing a lab assignment. Although the task was planned using partnerships to provide students with high levels of engagement and ownership, student responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of the purpose and importance of the activity. During the lesson, several students stated that the learning objective was important because it was part of their chapter. Only a few students were able to make a connection of the importance of the task to an endured understanding.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school utilizes a curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and makes refinements to strategies so that all students have access.

Impact

Planning for engagement and instructional coherence across the curricula using student data is consistent across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses ReadyGen and GoMath from grades kindergarten to 5, curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Additionally, science teachers are using concepts, skills, and strategies from these programs, to integrate the instructional shifts into the original science scope and sequence created by the school. A review of unit plans indicates that the school integrates close reading, using text-based evidence and incorporating academic vocabulary into its -school wide curricula. For example, in the science scope and sequence, content based words are evident in corresponding units, such as condensation and evaporation. Additionally, science lesson plans included a combination of Common Core Learning Standards such as writing informative/explanatory essays to examine a topic, and New York State science content standards relative to understanding how food supplies the energy necessary for growth in the human body.
- A review of student work and curricula demonstrates the integration of argumentative writing across content areas. For example, one social studies lesson plan indicated how students were required to develop a logical argument relative to which of the early civilizations in the Americas made the greatest contributions to society. In an English language arts unit plan, one task asked students to compare John Henry's vision of his friends future with what actually happens today and whether his actions made a difference. Students were required to use text details to support their answer.
- The school's decision to integrate the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provided a means to refine tasks n curricula. This year teachers developed a school wide template for lesson planning to include UDL related activities in all lessons and unit plans. Furthermore, via teacher teams, teachers refine tasks based on student benchmark assessments and conference notes to include modified tasks for groups of students. For example, in a math lesson plan, the teacher included tier 1 and 2 intervention plans which modified an activity on division. In a literacy plan, a teacher refined the ReadyGen lesson plan to include modified versions of the task and texts, use of sensory images, and a graphic organizer for different groups of students to provide them with access towards being cognitively engaged in learning standards related to identifying the theme of a text.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School wide assessments, including rubrics, conferences as ongoing checks for understanding, and student self-assessment, are all related to the curricula, and provide actionable feedback to support students' understanding of content related materials.

Impact

The use of assessments leads to actionable next steps so that students know what they need to do to improve. Adjustments to instruction promote meeting all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses multiple assessments, including City wide performance tasks, Teachers College running records, ReadyGen and Go Math benchmark assessments, school wide portfolios, and Achieve3000, aligned to the school curricula, to inform it of student progress. During interviews, administration and teachers noted how these assessments provided information for them on student progress. Additionally, this year, shifts to further align grading policies with the assessments were conducted to ensure that 50% of a student's grade consisted on how they performed on unit performance tasks.
- A review of student work folders and conference notes indicated that teachers provide feedback to students consistently across classes. According to teachers, feedback is provided verbally and in writing. Work folders demonstrated that students have access to written teacher's comments. During an interview, students provided input as to how teachers provided feedback to them in multiple ways. For example, one student stated, "At the end of the writing, our teacher gives us sticky notes and helps me know what I have to work on." After reading a sticky note provided on a work product, the student stated, "I have to add more voice in writing piece but more feeling. What this means is, I have to write more of what I would say in the piece and how I would sound in my writing." The student continued to state that the teacher, "Uses a conference sheet and she explains it and writes on it to communicate with us what we need so we understand what it means."
- During classroom observations, it was observed that teachers use conference notes to collect information of student understanding across content areas. In math, teachers use a Go Math Student Checklist to capture information of student understanding on skills assessed during a lesson. A review of the math checklists shows groupings for small group instruction in rounding and using number sense strategies, based off of the math formative assessment. Additionally, a review of exit slips and self-assessments demonstrates teacher effort to group students and reteach math concepts in using diagrams as a strategy to solve a word problem. One comment on the exit slips stated, "Come see me tomorrow so we can work on drawing a diagram."

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

Teacher teams are engaged in teacher-led structured inquiry based professional collaborations and there are opportunities for staff input into instructional decisions.

Impact

Instructional capacity has strengthened through the alignment of teacher collaborations with school goals. Teachers’ impact on instructional decisions has improved student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including agendas, ATLAS Student Work protocols, team notes, and supplemental materials, to support student progress. The focus of these meetings encompasses an integration of the school goals around using student data from varied assessments such as benchmark baselines, Rally examinations, and New York State data, to determine student strengths and learning needs and the development of strategies to support active engagement and academic achievement. Additionally, feedback from the administration is provided to teacher teams via email to improve the quality of the instructional work and provide suggestions for future meetings.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers used student work, and an ATLAS Student Work protocol to determine next steps for teaching practices. For example, teachers reviewed graphic organizers completed by students to determine their understanding of the main idea of a story and providing supporting details as evidence. One teacher determined that although her students improved in their understanding of main idea, there were some students who were still having difficulty with the concept. As a next step, the presenting teacher decided to reteach the concepts during guided reading using specific guiding questions and partnership work to support student understanding. The team decided to try these methodologies with their students by having them use the same graphic organizer and bring the information to the next team meeting for review.
- The Professional Development team which consists of teachers and a paraprofessional, meets to determine the teacher training foci and work on special instructional projects. For example, this year, the team developed a survey to develop school goals, determine areas of expertise with the Danielson Framework for Teaching (Dft), and areas they would like more support in during professional development. A review of the responses demonstrated a need to support teachers in engagement and classroom management. Therefore, the professional development plan was constructed to reflect these areas. Additionally, a review of teacher team minutes across grades, reflects teacher strategies to further engage students and address learning needs by using a ‘box and bullets’ strategy during close reading and the use of the Frayer model for vocabulary acquisition. As a school wide decision, teachers have decided to use these graphic organizers as a means of instructional support for students. The decision was fully accepted by the school administration.