



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Alice Austen School

Elementary School R060

**55 Merrill Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10314**

Principal: Donna Bonanno

**Date of review: November 24, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico**

The School Context

Alice Austen is an elementary school with 920 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 4% Black, 27% Hispanic, 57% White, 2% Multi-Racial, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.9%.

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	Well Developed
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

Teacher teams engage in focused inquiry based collaborations and have developed systems to ensure that teacher leaders are examining teacher practice, goal setting, student work and assessment data.

Impact

Strong professional collaborations and distributed leadership structures have resulted in teacher leadership opportunities linked to the focused analysis of assessment data positively affecting learning and achievement across grades.

Supporting Evidence

- In grade teams, there is a focus on looking at student work, revision of teaching points, curriculum modification and using assessment data more effectively to gauge individual student needs. For example, through the use of guided reading strategies, first grade teachers determined levels and skills of students and are able to focus on needed supports for all levels of students. Teachers shared that in addition to their regular meeting and professional development opportunities, additional preparation time supports the ongoing inquiry and planning. Examples of how this has impacted teacher practice leading to mastery for students are the consistent use of flexible grouping and student goal setting was seen in the conference notes and teachers' plans.
- During the teacher team meeting and in discussions with teachers, they articulated that school leaders promote an environment where teacher leadership is nurtured and where the principal and leaders model highly effective pedagogy. Teachers take the lead and turn-key professional learning.
- Teachers engage in a book club using the text, *Reading with Meaning*. This opportunity enables teachers to participate in focused discussions about specific reading strategies that can be incorporated during reading workshop and that will further support and enhance student learning and skill building. Foci include inferring, asking questions, modeling and determining importance in text.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Pedagogy across classrooms reflects a common set of beliefs about how students learn best and incorporates the instructional shifts. In some classrooms there were high levels of student thinking, engagement and participation as demonstrated in higher order thinking skills in student work.

Impact

Teaching practices focus on student engagement and accountability for learning for all students. However, in some classrooms, there were missed opportunities to challenge all learners resulting in uneven levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers utilized the workshop model, fostering small group discussion and writing. Additionally, in many classrooms there was student choice in selection of texts and participation in book clubs. In a 2nd grade writing workshop lesson, students chose a character web to begin creating fictional characters and their specific “character traits.” Students worked in groups and discussed the development of their fictional characters by discussing their character’s “feeling, thinking and actions.” Also, in a 1st grade math lesson, students were challenged to discuss strategies solving subtraction problems.
- Teaching strategies across classrooms included small group instruction, use of graphic organizers, tiered activities and questioning. Entry points and supports varied across classrooms. For example, in some classrooms, planning reflected purposeful grouping and task development for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. However, in a 5th grade class students had limited opportunity to share reactions and analyze text. There was no evidence of differentiated opportunities for students who had prerequisite skills to discuss the passage and describe the conflict.
- Accountable talk strategies and rubrics for discussion are used across classrooms. Opportunities for ‘turn and talk’ and group interaction are built in to the planning across grades. The consistency of the use of the reading and writing workshops is promoting rigor and encouraging increased student ownership for all learners. For example, in a third grade general education class in a writing activity, the teacher modeled a persuasive writing piece. The students had to discuss with a peer

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty strategically and reflectively align instruction to the shifts of the Common Core Learning Standards by looking at student work and data review that ensures refinement of curriculum.

Impact

As a result of curriculum refinements, the academic tasks and curricula meet the needs of all student sub-groups promoting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers ensure the effectiveness of curriculum and pedagogy strategically by being responsive and integrating the instructional shifts and promoting student thinking. To ensure coherence across grades the school has currently adopted Teacher's College (TC) for Reading and Writing workshops and supporting with guided reading to provide students with the tools necessary to be successful. For example, guided reading libraries are implemented in each classroom. Teachers are using running records and the Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) data to create their guided reading groups and planning strategic lessons. Across a vast majority of teachers' lesson plans small group instruction was planned for and groups were formed using the previous day's data. In a second grade teacher's plan, a push-in teacher's at-risk group was indicated with the review of a strategy the students would be practicing.
- Teachers are working collaboratively and strategically to align curriculum maps to the Common Core Learning Standards through inquiry teams. The inquiry teams are tracking student progress through data/inquiry cycles. This data is presented to the vertical teams which look at the Common Core Learning Standards demands above and below grade levels to further the curriculum development and look for impact data. For example, the first grade team looked at the "How To" reading and writing from TC and found that a pre/post assessment and strategy grouping was needed for their students to be successful. These additional curriculum components were added to the grade level map. In a Unit Plan for reading in second grade in reading information books, the teaching points are mapped out by days to be completed. The progression of skills include learning targets, book titles and the Common Core Learning Standards to be fulfilled by the end of the unit.
- The school leader presented and afforded teachers with an opportunity to attend summer professional development on curriculum mapping using the TC curriculum. The collaboration continued as teachers worked on developing and constructing rubrics that are directly correlated to the standards that are being taught. For example, a third grade opinion writing rubric is structured so that it is clearly aligned with the students meeting the writing standard of either on, above or below grade.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

A variety of precise and thorough feedback, ongoing checking for understanding and student self-assessment focuses on advancement of learning for all students. Pre-assessments and post-assessments data, checklists, teachers' conference notes and peer editing determine student groupings and provide a clear portrait of student mastery.

Impact

The use of assessments leads to actionable next steps through ongoing collection of formative and summative data across classrooms has resulted in concise tracking of student progress and prescriptive next steps, effective instructional adjustments at teacher teams and classroom levels demonstrated increased mastery of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Through conferencing with students, they articulated that when writing they are given rubrics to assist them with what is expected. These student-friendly rubrics were written by the teachers to help meet the needs of the students and allow for next steps. For example, a fifth grade child shared their research writing piece and was able to communicate their next steps of adding "voice" by reviewing the specific rubric. Another example is the rubric for opinion writing in second grade has the following assessment criteria structure (overall, lead, transitions, ending and organization), development (elaboration and craft), language conventions (spelling and punctuation).
- Across classrooms teachers created high-quality learning targets as a practice and used assessments effectively by note taking, individually conferencing with students and assigning exit slips. For example, in a fifth grade classroom while students were engaged in book discussions, the classroom teacher conferences with individual students on the reading skill of determining the theme. The teacher took notes on each child with strengths and next steps.
- As a result of teacher collaboration in math, teachers have engaged in the practice of aligning formal and informal assessments to the Common Core Learning Standards. These math benchmarks are providing teachers with data that assists in targeting instruction, creating strategy groups and interventions that meet the needs of all learners. For example, the teacher team meeting shared that the Go Math assessments needed further refinement and stronger rubrics. Additionally teachers are revising the end of unit Go Math Performance Tasks to align with the New York State Math rubric.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to faculty, families and students focused on the advancement of student learning and the school's rigorous goals connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Impact

High expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability, collaboration and buy-in on the part of teachers, leaders and families that creates an atmosphere conducive to the developmental needs of all students and supporting independence and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders model lessons for teachers and conduct professional development to the staff. The school leader conducts professional development on planning literacy instruction, creates a staff handbook and presents the school's instructional focus. For example, grade leaders were given professional development on reading and writing units, small group lessons and read-alouds. Additionally, school leaders monitor the Advance observations into tracking sheets to monitor teachers' progress and look for school-wide trends.
- Collaboratively teachers and administration plan parent engagement opportunities for families. The school affords family workshops at a variety of times throughout the day to meet the needs of the community. For example, parents are invited to the school to participate in publishing parties that classrooms host for their families. At these daytime events, students share their final published pieces of writing on a variety of genres throughout the year. Parents shared that the school sends phone messages every Friday to update the parents on school initiatives and events.
- Parents stated that the school has a system of clearly communicating about their children. The school has a parent handbook, school messenger and content-based newsletters that inform them of the school's goals and vision. These different types of communication techniques allows them to be informed of the school's expectations. For example, a parent shared that the use of the Dojo app, allowed her to track her son's behavior in class throughout the day.
- The school has reading progress reports in place to inform parents of their child's current reading. Teachers regularly take a running record of their students' ability levels. As the students' progress, letters are sent home by the classroom teacher. The letter informs the parent of the types of books that the child can read and their goals. For example, students create their own reading goals that they will work towards so that they have accountability for their own learning. Additionally, these reports are sent home in addition to the school report cards to give parents the most current information on their child.