



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Highbridge School

Elementary School X011

**1251 Ogden Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Dr. Joan Kong

**Date of review: January 9, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

The School Context

Highbridge is an elementary school with 755 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 29% Black, 69% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 19% 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 92.5%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	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	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teachers, across the vast majority of classrooms, plan and implement multiple entry points and extensions strategically to support all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in fully participating in rigorous academic tasks and demonstrating their thinking.

Impact

High quality supports and extensions enable all students to fully participate in challenging academic work and discussions where they demonstrate higher-order thinking about, and in ownership of their work.

Supporting Evidence

- In a third grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classroom, students were seated in groups reading “Let’s Classify Organisms”. A student explained, “We’re working on the kingdom of fungi. Fungi absorb their nutrients to grow.” Students further explained that everyone in the group has a “job”. Within this group, two students were taking notes and two students were reading excerpts of the text aloud to provide evidence and details. Students held each other accountable by asking each other for textual evidence of their claims. One teacher circulated throughout the room, facilitating the group work. For example, as a student claimed, “The animals survive from their environment.” the teacher encouraged his peers to “help him out” by providing more detail. Another responded, “Their environment provides water.” The other teacher sat with a small group of struggling students to provide additional scaffolding and guidance.
- Throughout classrooms, students assume the roles of room facilitator or table leader while the teacher circulates to monitor student discussion and problem solving. For example, in one classroom a student led a review of three-dimensional geometric shapes. As he projected images of each shape on the Smart-board, his peers, seated in groups, discussed the attributes and identified each shape. As students began sharing out, the room facilitator challenged a group to explain their answers by asking, “How do you know it’s a triangular prism?” A student responded, “It has six vertices and five sides.”
- In a fifth grade bilingual classroom students worked on subtracting decimals to the hundredths. During the modeling component of the lesson, the teacher read a posted math problem aloud and thought out loud as she solved it. During the guided practice the teacher read a similar problem aloud as students jotted their work on scratch paper in partnerships and compared their solutions and answers with the rest of the class. During independent practice, students worked on differentiated task sheets in leveled math groups. The task sheets were written in Spanish and English. All dialogue was in Spanish. Each table had a table captain whose job was to assist students. The teacher worked closely with the lowest-performing students and checked in on the other groups, intermittently, as she used a checklist to assess students’ proficiency in skills such as carrying down the decimal to the appropriate place.
- Student samples of narrative procedure math writing, wherein students showed their work through various models and explained their work in writing, were observed in fourth grade classrooms. Multiple drafts of Common Core-aligned essays in all core subject areas were posted in classrooms and on hallway bulletin boards throughout the grades.

Area of Focus

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

The majority of teachers participate in inquiry-driven teacher team collaborations with a focus on the Common Core Learning standards and school wide goals. While this professional collaboration strengthens instructional capacity, this practice is not yet directly correlated to increased achievement for all students. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data for students they share.

Impact

The analysis and discussion of student work and student data improves teachers' instructional capacity. Teacher teamwork promotes the achievement of school goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal reported that all horizontal (grade-level) teacher teams meet for two periods per week. The vertical teacher team, comprising one representative from each grade, kindergarten through fifth, meets once every two weeks. Teachers reported that while this is true, they also meet informally with greater frequency.
- During a third grade teacher team meeting teachers followed a standard protocol for looking at student work. The presenting teacher shared four excerpts of conclusions from student essays. The task was a performance-based assessment task that was familiar to all teachers present. Teachers analyzed the excerpts for about five-seven minutes and began to compare the student writing samples. The teachers selected a "strong" conclusion and a "weak" conclusion and discussed the salient criteria of each. Teachers also discussed common convention errors that were made by students and began talking about skill areas to target for instruction.
- During the teacher team question and answer session, teachers reported that during team meetings they work to ensure that students have multiple entry points into the Common Core curricula. They maintain that teacher teams focus on designing text-based questions and strategies that will promote classroom discussion in order to create greater accessibility to the curriculum for all students. This reflects a focus on school-wide goal # 2 which is, "To improve student achievement by delivering rigorous instruction that is customized to focus on discussion and questioning and insuring that the curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standard and accessible to all learners."

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across grades and subject areas, school leaders and faculty align curricula to content and Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula development and on-going refinement is data-driven.

Impact

Careful alignment of curricula to the Common Core and intentional integration of instructional shifts establishes instructional coherence across grades that promotes college and career readiness for all students. Data-driven curricula refinement ensures that all students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- In collaboration with the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) center and a long-term partner, Learning Center Initiatives, teacher teams use the Understanding by Design backward design model to develop the integrated units of study from high-level essential questions. Through this process teachers have modified the Ready Gen curriculum to include content standard-aligned science and social studies topics and tasks that provide more opportunities for informational writing, which test item analyses illuminated as an area in need of support. For example, the fourth grade teacher team included an informational essay performance task in Unit 1B - Examining the World around Us, wherein students selected an unusual animal to report on. Additional text-based and on-line resources were also required and the use of domain specific vocabulary was emphasized. Grade 2, Unit 1A - Understanding Communities also reflects a revision task in which students are engaged in high-level critical thinking, specifically synthesis, as they are instructed to make a movie pitch to Pixar studios by writing a narrative scene to *Charlotte's Web* using cues and characters from the text.
- Every October, all fifth grade students, including English language learners and students with disabilities are required to select three middle schools of interest, research each school through text-based and online resources and write a Common Core-aligned essay for each school. Scaffolds provided for the assignment are a writing checklist, a Common Core research rubric and peer editing. Each essay is developed through the writing process and graded by the teacher, who also provides rubric-aligned feedback.
- A review of student work samples across the grades (grade 2 English as a second language and bilingual classes, grade 5 general education and special education classes) demonstrated that students are explicitly taught to "Make sense of math problems and persevere in solving them." Students are taught to use a six-step math problem-solving protocol wherein they must: restate the problem in their own words, list possible strategies, show the work using steps, charts, graphs, pictures or patterns, state the answer in a complete sentence, check the math using an inverse operation, and use an alternate strategy to solve the problem.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create performance-based assessments and student-friendly rubrics aligned to school curricula. In addition, across grades and subject areas, data from common assessments inform instructional modifications.

Impact

Common assessments and rubrics ensure actionable feedback to students and teachers. Data-driven analysis of a variety of common assessments informs instructional planning and targeted modifications to curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Students receive adapted Common Core aligned rubrics for all teacher-created literacy/content area performance-based assessments and Go Math performance-based assessments. Some examples are the Narrative Procedure Math Writing Task Rubric, the 5th grade Research Rubric, and the 5th grade Trait Informative Writing Rubric. Each rubric serves as a scaffold for students as they engage in the work, as well as the measure used by the teacher to evaluate student performance and provide feedback.
- Teacher teams analyze Go Math baseline, mid-year, and end-of-year data and chart the growth by class and grade on color-coded graphs. School leaders shared that analysis of the beginning of year and middle of year data reflects growth in numbers of students meeting proficiency standards in math across the grades. The average percentage increases in students moving up into Levels 3 and 4 are as follows: grade 1 - 20%, grade 2 - 5%, grade 3 - 11% percent, grade 4 - 10% and grade 5 - 4%. School leaders attribute the positive trend to on-going close analysis of data and immediate instructional planning to close curricular gaps and address common misconceptions. Teachers also administer Ready Gen end-of-unit assessments to inform instructional planning.
- Teacher teams conduct item skills analyses of the end-of-year summative tests in math and English Language Arts. Analysis of the English Language Arts test revealed a deficit in informational writing which prompted teachers to supplement the Ready Gen units of study with more Common Core-aligned writing tasks.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders convey high expectations to the entire faculty and provide a commensurate level of training to support teachers in meeting those expectations. School leaders and teachers successfully communicate expectations that support students on the path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Consistent messaging coupled with on-going professional development establishes a culture of mutual accountability toward meeting set expectations. Communication that emphasizes college and career pathways and regular updates on students' progress cultivate successful school and family partnerships so that parents support their children's' progress toward being college and career ready.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have planned and coordinated thirty-six sessions of professional learning which spiral throughout the year, comprising but not limited to the following teacher-selected topics: looking at student work, Capacity Framework, collaborative planning, questioning, close-reading, academic vocabulary, social studies scope & sequence, response to intervention and English Language Learners and Annual Measurement Achievement Objectives (AMAO) data analysis. Sessions vary in structure as follows: whole school, breakout groups, teacher share fair, collaborative planning, and professional text study group.
- School leaders engage the entire faculty and student body in a short town hall meeting to begin each day. During the "town hall" school leaders communicate high expectations, celebrate accomplishments, share news and set a positive tone for the day.
- As reflected in a school-wide calendar, the principal hosts meetings, entitled "Conversations with Dr. Kong" throughout the year, on a rotating basis with all constituencies throughout the building including but not limited to custodial staff, school safety, cafeteria staff, para-professionals, instructional coaches, instructional team, enrichment team. These meetings provide a forum for reinforcing school-wide expectations, collaborative planning and problem solving.
- Faculty members communicate with families through many venues such as grade-wide newsletters (i.e. 3rd grade Gazette), parent round table conversations (with principal and parent coordinator), ELL parent meetings, and special needs students parent meetings.
- The school has provided field trips and onsite learning experiences for parents such as: a trip to the High Bridge Library, English language arts test preparation seminar at Mercy College, Bridge Builder legal services seminar, No Place for Hate parent workshop and a nutrition awareness certification program conducted on-site by the Cornell Co-operative Extension.