



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Joseph Rodman Drake School

08X048

**1290 Spofford Avenue
Bronx
NY 1474**

Principal: Roxanne Cardona

**Date of review: December 16, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Socorro Diaz**

The School Context

Joseph Rodman Drake School is an elementary school with 855 students from grade Pre-K through grade 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91%.

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 | Additional Findings | 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 | Focus | 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 | Celebration | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

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

The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations during which pedagogical practice, assessment data, and student work is analyzed. These teams continually engage in distributed leadership.

Impact

The school's professional collaborations and distributed leadership structures have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers and mastery of goals for groups of students as well as their involvement in school decision making.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal ensures that teachers engage in ongoing professional collaborations in the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. This work is aligned to the school's instructional goals, promoting improved teacher practice and progress towards students' goals as evident by the school's weekly schedule and teachers' program. The school's teacher schedule shows multiple opportunities for teachers to participate and engage in teacher team meetings.
- Teacher teams, grade teams, inquiry teams, professional learning communities meet weekly, bi-weekly and monthly to engage in inquiry-based work and to examine student work. Teachers conduct daily checks in with colleagues on discussions of students they share and on whom they are focused. During a grade 3 inquiry team meeting, teachers reviewed the previous data to determine next steps. Teachers reviewed the instructional activities attached to the implemented lessons and made adjustments for future lessons. Discussions about students' progress were alive during the meeting where specific student goals were established.
- Teachers are engaged in professional reflection, supporting each other through a completion of a survey that determines their strengths and areas of need. During a team meeting, multiple teachers expressed that they share lessons plans, instructional activities, reach out to each other for support and schedule inter-visitations to improve pedagogy and share effective teaching practices.
- Collaborative teams are facilitated by grade leaders and teachers rotate team roles and responsibilities across grades. Grade leaders collaborate to share the work of their grade teams with their colleagues and leadership by email, and meet with school leaders monthly to discuss issues of school-wide importance such as, professional development offerings and opportunities. Grade team leaders also turnkey instructional practices learned during out of school trainings and network monthly meetings. During a team meeting observed, a new teacher expressed that he felt 100% supported by his colleagues.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across the school teachers use common assessments to track student progress and make adjustments to curricula. Although teachers regularly check for understanding and students self-assess, the practice of making effective adjustments to meet all students learning needs varies across the school.

Impact

The monitoring of student progress at the teacher team and classroom level as well as the regular use of checks for understanding have not yet resulted in increased mastery for all students and all learners are not fully aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- All school assessments administered by the school are aligned to content curricula and the CCLS. Assessment results are used to evaluate lessons and to determine whether the material needs to be retaught, reviewed and/or spiraled. Unit tests and tasks, as well as reading levels, math mastery and writing assessments show the bigger picture and are used to adjust curricula from year to year as evident by the school summary data charts.
- Teachers use common end of the unit assessments in English language arts and mathematics that are aligned to school-wide areas of instructional focus to track student performance. Targeted support and interventions are in place for all students. However, targeted supports for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities are not yet resulting in increased mastery across all content areas.
- In classrooms observed, teachers used exit slips, white boards, thumbs up and down, rubrics specific to the task, one on one conferencing with students, and peer and self-assessment to check for understanding. Although the school uses a variety of assessment practices and on ongoing checks for understanding, some students need further support in their academic skills to increase mastery of standards.

Additional Findings

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|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to CCLS and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The curricula facilitate student's ownership of learning and instructional tasks are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps reviewed across content areas provide evidence of alignment to CCLS and emphasized rigorous tasks. For example, a kindergarten math curriculum asked students to analyze, represent and create relationships related to whole numbers with sets of objects. The curriculum maps showed standards addressed and the domains for each standard.
- The school's instructional focus is to gather text-based evidence to add details to student writing and discussions in all content areas. This goal was chosen after a careful analysis of last year's New York State exams extended writing and short responses. The school found that their students were not adding text-based evidence to their writing. Ongoing conversations with teachers and the instruction team supported the redesigning of their literacy block by increasing independent reading time to thirty minutes and bringing back guided reading. In addition, teachers are now using anchor texts as shared reading and using high level questions for close reading.
- Academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data and promote college and career readiness providing access to a diversity of learners. Writing, reading and looking for text evidence are skills needed for college readiness, and this strategy is built as students' progress through the grades. It also helps them to become critical thinkers. The school uses different instructional tools to support the diversity of their learners: Foundations and Wilson for struggling readers and special needs populations; Fast Forward (RTI online program) in grades 3-5 is offered to improve memory and processing and Smarty Ants is used to build comprehension and fluency to include word study in grades K-2. School-wide vocabulary using tier 2 and tier 3 thematic based words are taught in all lessons.

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices including questioning and scaffolding techniques are aligned to the curricula and consistently provide multiple entry points and quality supports for all learners. Student discussion and work products reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

In most classrooms, students are motivated and actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions resulting in producing meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade 5 English language arts class, students were asked to identify features of a non-fiction text and to group information logically with supporting visuals. Students worked in small differentiated groups and explored different chapters in the book to determine how specific features of the text help them as readers. Some students used a graphic organizer named “Features of Non-fiction Text”. At the end of the activity, all students completed a learning reflection sheet.
- In classroom visited, students participated in class discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions. In a math class, the teacher asked, “How can you find how many counters there are in 2 groups?” “What if we make 4 groups of 2? How can you find how many counters there are in all”? In a grade 3 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, the teacher asked, “What do you know about Ms. Agnes”? “What did we learned so far about Ms. Agnes”? Students generated their own questions in four out of the seven classrooms visited.
- A review of students portfolios in most classrooms visited revealed a consistent work in argumentative writing stating a claim, counterclaim, and text-based evidence, yet in depth analysis in peer-to-peer reviews was evident in some portfolios.
- Principal, teachers and students described their school-wide focus on gathering text-based evidence to add details to student writing and discussions in all content areas; this practice was observed in most classrooms visited. In a guided reading lesson, the teacher asked students to think strategically and answer the following questions, “What do you think about what you just read? Reactions?” “Based on the text, why was the salesman more excited about the steam drill than John Henry was?” In a grade 5 writing class students were asked to share their connections they thought while reading, text-to-text or text-to-self using their conversation techniques and listening skills. In another class, students read their section, using post-its, they took notes on facts they learned while reading, using text-based evidence, students created a food chain that they could be found in the rain forest.

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to the entire staff and provide quality training to help meet these expectations. A culture for learning exists that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

School leaders foster a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations. Communications support learning to ensure success and higher achievement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school communicates high expectations to staff, inclusive of training and a system of accountability. During faculty conferences the staff is informed of supervisory assignments; lesson plan expectations, professional development and training opportunities, academic and behavior intervention practices, collaborative team meetings and program schedule changes. During one on one conference, initial planning and end of year conferences with teachers, school leaders discuss expectations and goals for the year, observation options and Measures of Teacher Practice and Measures of Student Learning. There are multiple opportunities for teachers to participate in training and professional development offerings as shared by teachers during team meetings.
- The school communicates with families in English and Spanish and any other specific language requested based on availability. The school staff including paraprofessionals, teachers, aides, coaches and administrative team support families' understanding of high expectations for college and career readiness. A monthly newsletter goes out to parents containing relevant school information, instructional focus, upcoming events and updates on parents and families workshops and community outreach. Once a month parents are invited to "Breakfast with the Principal" where parents have an opportunity to talk to the principal and express their thoughts, concerns and needs about the school community. Twice a year, the school opens its doors to parents to spend the day in their child's classroom. During the parents' meeting they expressed the importance of being active members in the school community and participating in meetings with the principal where they feel encouraged to ask questions.
- Staff communicates and supports high expectations for students. For example, teachers provide students feedback based on what they do well and next steps for areas of need. In addition, rubrics are created for writing, reading, listening, and personal behavior to allow students to peer assess and self-assess. The school also celebrates students' academics and attendance through monthly assemblies and parents are invited and honored for their contributions. During daily morning announcements four students are invited to speak on the loudspeaker. Students are invited to say their names, grades, and share their goals. At the end of the announcement the principal asked the students, "What is the best school in the universe?" "Who is the smartest?" "Who is going to college?" On the day of the visit, four first graders came down to the principal's office and made the morning announcement. Each one of them read their goals written on an index card and proudly said, "We are going to college".