



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 055 Benjamin Franklin

Elementary X055

**450 Saint Paul's Place
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Luis Eladio Torres

**Date of review: February 27, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

The School Context

P.S. 055 Benjamin Franklin is an elementary school with 732 students from prekindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 51% Black and 49% Hispanic students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.2%.

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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborative teacher teams with a focus on the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and school wide goals. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers a voice in key decision-making across the school.

Impact

Collaborative teacher teamwork supports standards-driven teaching and the attainment of school goals. Distributed leadership structures enable teachers to play a role in key decision-making.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade 1 teacher team meeting, teachers analyzed student samples of narrative response writing presented by an integrated co-teaching team. As team members read the selected samples, they referred to the Ready Gen narrative writing rubric to analyze the student work. The team included general education teachers as well as a dual language teacher. Teachers also discussed the strategies and structures that they used to scaffold the writing skills of students with special needs and English language learners such as vocabulary lessons and graphic organizers.
- In support of school wide annual goal 1 which states, “By June 2015, all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, will demonstrate progress toward achieving state standards as measured by a 2% increase on the benchmark assessments within Ready Gen and GoMath! for kindergarten to second grade and a 5% increase on the state English language arts (ELA) and math exams for the remaining grades”, teacher teams consistently focus on developing and sharing scaffolds to enhance access for students with disabilities and ELLs. For example, teachers shared that they provide many illustrations, use graphic organizers, sentence starters and label classroom items as well as require students to label their illustrations in writing. Teachers also clarify math vocabulary. Teachers shared that they plan backwards from the performance-based assessment to ensure that they teach all of the standards and concepts within each unit of Ready Gen and GoMath!.
- As reported by the principal, in addition to the horizontal teacher teams on each grade, there are several vertical teacher teams. The curriculum team, comprising grade leaders, the United Federation of Teachers representative, assistant principals, the teacher center coach and the literacy coach, oversees school-wide instructional initiatives. The professional development team, which includes the coaches, assistant principal and para-professionals, surveys staff member’s professional development needs. The school-wide data team and the college prep team are also vertical teams that analyze data and focus on issues specific to their respective titles. These vertical teams are vehicles for distributive leadership.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect beliefs about student learning as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. However, teaching strategies do not always provide multiple entry points nor fully engage all students in appropriately challenging tasks.

Impact

Implementation of teaching strategies that do not consistently provide multiple entry points leads to uneven student engagement and limited evidence of critical thinking on the part of students.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classrooms, essential questions served as focal points for student discussions. For example, in one class the essential question was, “How does a writer use evidence to support comparing and contrasting in essays?” Students engaged in partner discussions to share their text-based responses to the “Birchbark House” with a focus on comparing and contrasting. During a follow-up discussion, students reflected on how the group discussions affected their overall comprehension. In contrast, a teacher-centered approach, which limited student-to-student discussion and engagement, was also evident in some classrooms. For example, in another class the teacher read the posted enduring understanding and essential question. She then read a question from the social studies text aloud, as well as several pages of the text. Following the reading, she asked a few questions at rapid-fire pace and only selected students who raised their hands to answer.
- In some classrooms, teachers engaged students in considering the real world application of the concepts that they are learning in school. For example, in a math class where the focus was on fractions, the teacher asked, “Why is it important to find parts of the whole in the real world?” Students discussed their ideas, some of which were, “to cook”, “to share pizza, cake and other foods with friends and family” and “to build things”.
- In one class, during a whole class lesson, many students had already achieved mastery in the phonemic awareness skills that were a focus in the Foundations (early-literacy intervention program) drill, as demonstrated by their rapid generation of words in response to initial consonant sounds. During the debrief, it was evident that the whole class did not need this intervention drill and the activity lacked rigor for the many students who mastered the phonemic awareness skill.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that Common Core aligned curricula integrate the instructional shifts and build instructional coherence and college and career readiness. Teachers use student work and data to plan curricula and academic tasks that can provide access and cognitive engagement for a diversity of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Impact

The implementation of coherent Common Core aligned curricula promotes college and career readiness and leads to cognitive engagement for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has implemented the Common Core aligned curricula Ready Gen and GoMath! throughout the grades. School leaders shared that the curriculum team analyzed these curricula and selected them based upon their alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Across the grades, curriculum maps highlight curricular modifications, some of which are revising some essential questions to include a focus on writing as well as reading and more response writing tasks. The curriculum team had developed comprehensive integrated curriculum maps illustrating the alignment of all core subject areas with the Common Core Standards and/or content standards.
- In order to support the 58% of all students who are reading below grade level (at levels 1 and 2), school leaders have developed and integrated daily guided reading and a daily fifty minute independent reading period with the ELA instructional block. Teachers plan guided reading lessons using the “guided reading planning and evaluation sheet”.
- In alignment with the school’s instructional focus, “using questioning to engage students in high level discussions”, teachers use Webb’s Depth of Knowledge levels to develop essential and guiding questions for unit and lesson plans across grades and subject areas.
- The school houses vertical hydroponic greenhouses. All classes participate in this project-based learning initiative, which supplements the science curriculum.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is developing in the use of common assessments to measure progress. Teachers checking for understanding and student self-assessment are inconsistent practices.

Impact

Inconsistent monitoring of student understanding limits teachers' abilities to adjust instruction effectively to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across the grades administer Fountas and Pinnell running records at four designated benchmark periods throughout the year. They then collate and graph the data by class and grade. In addition, teachers across the grades administer on demand writing prompts and end of unit performance based assessments in math and literacy.
- During the meeting with school leadership, the principal shared that observation data indicated, "Teachers were struggling with on-going checks for understanding." He further stated that the common understanding of assessment was to "give a test". Teachers were trained on formative assessment as well as given the resource "Tools for Formative Assessment – Techniques to Check for Understanding", which details sixty formative assessment strategies. However, during the visit, inconsistent teacher practice in this area was evident.
- In a self-contained special education class, the teacher read math word problems aloud as students used individual whiteboards to illustrate their solutions. Students used number lines, algorithms or arrays to solve the problems. After each problem, students held up their work and the teacher assessed each student's work using a checklist. Immediately afterward, the teacher grouped students for guided and independent work based upon this quick assessment. Conversely, in another special education class, students sat in three groups and two students were working at the computer on the Star Fall program. One group sat with the para-professional to read a text. The teacher assisted the highest performing group, who worked with a semantic map to review the events in a story. Another group of students sat at desks playing with Play-Doh. This group's task was supposed to focus on phonemic awareness. The task was to form the initial letter of the name of each picture using the Play-Doh. However, they had no guidance and with no one checking their work, most of the students did not focus on the task, and most of the students in this group did not know what they were supposed to do.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders consistently message high expectations to the staff and are developing an accountability system for these expectations. The school is in the process of developing more effective communication systems to convey student progress to families.

Impact

Professional development opportunities support teachers in meeting the expectations of school leaders. Not all parents feel well informed of student progress due to inconsistent communication from the school.

Supporting Evidence

- English as a second language and dual language teachers attend professional development sessions facilitated by the New York City Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network at Fordham University. The United Federation of Teachers teacher center coach attends coaching seminars through the New Teacher Center and teacher leaders engage in professional learning cycles. In addition, the Scholar Centric professional development company conducted a comprehensive data review focused on a school wide survey assessing students in the following areas: valuing education, academic confidence, connectedness, stress management, health, well-being, and intrinsic motivation. The principal shared that he believes analysis of this data will support the faculty in identifying each student’s level of preparedness for the rigor of college and career.
- During the parent meeting, some parents voiced that they receive communication from teachers regarding their child’s progress. For example, a parent of a student with an individualized education plan shared his daughter’s communication notebook in which the teacher documents daily progress. Some other parents stated that the communication regarding student progress is inconsistent and untimely. Specifically, these parents stated that they were surprised to receive promotion-in-doubt letters for their children without any prior communication from teachers regarding their child’s lack of progress.
- Parents also stated that they believe the principal has high expectations for the school community as evidenced by the many programs that he has procured for the school, such as the arts program through the Bronx Children’s Museum, the Green Bronx Machine hydroponic garden program, the Montefiore community clinic and the afterschool program.