



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Norwood Heights School**

**10X056**

**3177 Webster Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10467**

**Principal: Priscilla Sheeran**

**Date of review: December 3, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel**

## The School Context

P.S. 056 is an elementary school with 665 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 8% Black, 58% Hispanic, 8% White, 25% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

The school designs and uses common assessments to monitor student progress toward mastery of standards and provides all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities with targeted feedback.

### Impact

Assessment outcomes determine curricular and instructional adjustments and students' assess the quality of their work resulting in increased student achievement and student ownership of learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- During the first month of school, teachers administered student baselines and Developmental Reading Assessments (DRA) to gain a clear picture of where students fall on the continuum toward grade level standards. The analysis of formative and summative data is used to adjust lessons and provide students with targeted supports including after school programs, tutorial sessions, and book clubs.
- Students expressed that they aspired to be at a level three or four and articulated that they use rubric and checklist criteria to reach standard levels and beyond.
- Teachers routinely check for student understanding of lessons taught by conferring with students, annotating student misconceptions. In addition, both teachers and students consistently check their progress in reading by following student Achieve 3000 weekly results. For example, students in a fifth grade special education class self – assessed and discussed with their teacher what specific reading area presented a challenge and collaboratively designed a plan of action to improve in that area.
- Students assess the quality of their own work using rubric criteria and often collaboratively create high level rubrics and criteria for their own work. For example, through the analysis of exemplars, students in fifth grade class determined the criteria for writing an analytic essay.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

The vast majority of teachers routinely engage in structured collaborations to share best practices and participate in professional learning communities. Teachers assume lead roles on their teams.

### Impact

The school's exemplary professional collaborations bolster teacher pedagogy and promote effective teacher leadership that increases student achievement to mastery levels. However, teacher team inquiry-based collaborations that examine teacher practice and support student next steps beyond mastery of standard levels are limiting all students from maximizing their learning above standard levels.

### Supporting Evidence

- To ensure extension of student thinking, teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations that meet twice a week to facilitate the integration of making thinking visible techniques into their instructional practice. However, these meeting outcomes are not yet fully improving student learning, including for all subgroups.
- Teacher teams examine and analyze student work and identify strategies aligned to making thinking visible techniques to improve the quality of their work. For example, during a teacher team meeting observed, teachers looked at student work and considered which of the strategies could be used to bring students to the next levels and further support English language learners. Teacher recommendations included the tug of war technique, where students present a problem, identify the two sides of the problem and explore the problem posing "what if" types of questions.
- Teachers meet twice a week and during lunch and learn sessions to determine areas of their own expertise so they may provide staff with professional learning in a particular area of strength. Teachers shared that a member of the staff conducted a cycle of professional learning on the extended use of Achieve 3000.
- The school's professional collaborations stimulate teacher leadership and increase student performance as evidence by a 15-point increase in New York State Test Math levels. The staff expressed that they "learn from each other." Teachers readily video their instructional practices and provide each other with warm and cool feedback. However, professional collaborations have not yet led to an increase in proficiency levels on New York State English language arts for all students.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

Curricula in all subjects are deeply aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Strategically designed challenging academic tasks highlight higher order thinking skills for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

### Impact

As a result of the school's curricular decisions, across grades and subjects the school's curricula engages students in meaningful rigorous authentic tasks that elevates critical thinking and prepares students for college and career.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students write across an array of topics and genres. A review of student portfolios reveals a volume of high quality student writing. For example, in a fourth grade class, students read a myriad of short text material, trade books and were required to synthesize information from what they read and write a literary essay selecting from one of two possible topics around the study of how Native Americans used their environment to survive.
- Social studies content is incorporated into the school's own designed English language arts units deeply integrating the Common Core Learning Standards instructional shifts. A review of English language arts units across grades demonstrate a range of targeted standards that include reading, writing, listening and speaking standards addressed in units. In addition, a review of unit plans reveal that students are expected to read a collection of complex text that complement the units.
- The school strategically embeds tasks into the curricula to make student thinking visible. For example, in a kindergarten class, learners were immersed in a social studies unit about family and students were expected to draw and label a color, symbol and image that depicted their family. Using the academic vocabulary, one student drew and labeled a purple sweater and expressed it was her mother's favorite. Another student drew and labeled a heart and expressed that the symbol represented the love the family had for each other and yet another student drew and labeled a beach scene as the image where the family had the most fun.
- Lesson plans reviewed infused real world culminating academic tasks. For example, in a fifth grade special education class, students had a choice of writing an essay or letter about an individual studied from the World War II period. One student from the class stated that he chose to write a letter to a Holocaust survivor because the study causes him to have many questions and he could not imagine the hardship the individual experienced.

**Findings**

School leaders and teachers believe students learn best through active participation in their own learning. Teachers facilitate high-level student group discussions and work products reflect high levels of thinking.

**Impact**

Across classrooms teachers operate from a coherent set of beliefs, facilitate student deep discussions about their work, engage students in collaborative learning experiences, thus elevating student thinking and resulting in the production of quality student work that demonstrates student ownership.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Students participate in-group inquiry, gather information, draw conclusions, and routinely engage in discussions about their work. For example, in a third grade class, students were provided with a map and a specific country or state had been highlighted on the map. Based on the geographic location of the state or country, students discussed how the geographic location affected the culture and lifestyle of the group of people living in the area. Students used the information to develop educated guesses about the population's clothing, food, occupations and forms of recreation. Students in one group animatedly expressed the people would wear boots and heavy layers of clothing because the state was located far from the equator and near the ocean causing the climate to be cold and snowy.
- Informed by Danielson's Framework for Teaching, school leaders and staff have focused specifically on using questions and discussion techniques. In all classrooms visited, students engaged in conversations about their work. In addition, teacher questioning was tiered and teachers posed a range of questions from low to high.
- Instructional tasks and student work products promote both student creative and critical thinking levels. For example, in a fifth grade class, after reading *Esperanza Rising*, students worked collaboratively to design and perform a script based on a chapter of the book. Moreover, students were expected to integrate key ideas from the text *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and students used a rubric to evaluate and critique the student group performance.
- Students in another fifth grade class engaged in writing analytical essays. One student shared that she had written an essay that included the challenges the character in the story encountered during the Mexican Revolution, and compared the character to the Phoenix rising.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### **Findings**

The school's collective body consistently communicates high expectations connected to a college and career path to students and families. Guidance advisements provide all students with supports that prepare them for their next levels.

### **Impact**

As a result of the school's strategically designed structures for effectively communicating a common set of high expectations, all stakeholders strengthen partnerships with families and elevate student learning and independence.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Parent workshops, student progress reports, monthly newsletters, ongoing parent outreach and weekly contact with parents ensure students and families remain informed of student progress. For example, students and families across grades three through five track student progress on Achieve 3000 assessments ensuring students move toward reading complex text and focus on strengthening areas of challenge in reading comprehension. In addition, to further include parents in the lifeline of the school and address their needs, English as a second language classes are offered to parents and the school's student council coordinates family bingo and movie nights.
- In preparation for college and career, all students are expected to strengthen their reading stamina by reading a minimum of 50 books across the school year and engaging in real world writing experiences for a variety of purposes including persuading and informing their reading audience.
- The school devoted the first three days of school to ensuring teachers confer with students and support them in creating appropriate learning goals. Teachers routinely confer with all students, including lowest and highest achievers, provide guidance to students on gauging their progress toward standards and beyond and identify next steps toward achievement of the goals set.
- As part of the school's beliefs, students are guided toward independence. For example, students maintain planners and are expected to organize their notes and homework in the planners. Students expressed that after they complete assignments, parents sign the planners each day. The strategic focus on guiding students through organizing for effort and developing disciplined study habits prepares students for the expectations of real life.