



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Journey Prep

Elementary School X069

**560 Thieriot Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Sheila Durant

**Date of review: March 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo**

The School Context

Journey Prep is an elementary school with 589 students from pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 17% Black, 78% Hispanic, 2% Asian, and 3% other students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

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 | 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 | 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

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

Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers engage in structured professional collaborations on teams and consistently analyze assessment data and student work so that plans are adjusted to meet students' needs.

Impact

A focus on analysis of data, shared responsibilities, and effective teacher leadership, has resulted in strong reflection and improved instructional practices that impact student achievement and progress in writing.

Supporting Evidence

- An instructional core team comprised of staff members from each grade leads the work around curriculum development, assessing student learning, professional learning initiatives, and coherence of instructional practices. The team collaboratively reviews and develops the school-wide based professional development that is relevant for all participating staff members and offered during the Professional Development block. Furthermore, this core group of teachers meets regularly to discuss next steps for the school as well as to develop and practice facilitation skills that are then used at their grade-level teacher team sessions.
- Teacher teams establish clear next steps based on patterns observed in assessments and student work samples and set individualized student plans based on needs. For example, during a fifth grade team meeting, the presenter described the task, class, group of students, reading level, writing skills, and behavioral profile for three students. They also referenced their analysis of the January assessments results, whereby they noticed a common thread by looking at the item analysis delineating that students needed additional support in explaining how the author uses reasoning and evidence. Teachers shared that they used both the formative and summative data to make decisions, supported by the administration, about adjustments to curricula and unit plans.
- A school-wide data team was established to monitor the progress of students and determine school-wide next steps. Teachers meet on a weekly basis and extend their work during professional development time on Mondays to engage in inquiry work. The instructional focus this year is questioning and discussion techniques. Teacher facilitators support the teams in analyzing student work to surface skill deficits that students demonstrate, and to use six-week assessments as diagnostic benchmarks in measuring student progress towards reaching proficiency. Teachers also shared that the team supports individual teachers to ensure that effective progress monitoring of students is in alignment with teacher practice.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

There is a universal philosophy throughout the school based on how students learn best that is aligned to the Danielson Framework so that the needs of all learners are met.

Impact

School wide practices, including questioning and discussion techniques, Making Thinking Visible, scaffolds, and real-world applications, are evident across grades and classes, and student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and involvement.

Supporting Evidence

- In a fourth grade class students were asked to investigate hypothesis and wonderings on the properties of rocks using a scientific inquiry protocol. After a read aloud of “The Story of Archimedes Principle”, the teacher engaged the students with deep, higher-level questioning, students were encouraged to build off the ideas of peers, agree, or disagree, using conversational prompts, or citing textual evidence. Students were able to articulate the teacher’s expectations of the task and the tools they needed to use to explain the importance of experimenting, and the impact it had on their hypothesis.
- In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, teachers modeled a procedure with hair braiding. Then one teacher showed the class a procedural letter she wrote about teaching someone to braid. The letter was not written in the correct order, nor was there sequencing or use of transition words. Students were asked to turn-and-talk to their partners and decide whether the letter was an effective or ineffective letter, and provide examples to support their response. Then as a whole class the students helped rewrite the letter using a checklist so they could assess the teacher’s procedural letter and self-assess their own learning.
- In a grade 5 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math class, students were divided in two groups. One group was working with a teacher to multiply and divide fractions of mixed numbers by discussing and solving real-world cooking tasks. The other group was working with a second teacher to solve real life word problems, using their knowledge of adding and subtracting fractions, equivalent fractions and converting mixed numbers and improper fractions. Students were observed using individual math charts, fraction bars, area models, and mixed-up Recipe Performance Task. All students used math language, accountable talk, and were able to show written and verbal explanations of how tasks were solved.
- A visit to the pre-kindergarten classes’ revealed visibly rich project-based learning, inspired by the Reggio philosophy, that are integrated into all areas of the curriculum, incorporating themes chosen by students. Students explore new learning through real world applications, exploration, inquiry, and discovery, as evident by the project on Africa.
- Second graders were observed researching the life cycle of plants using an online encyclopedia, the internet, and taking notes on a graphic organizer. English language learners were observed using Brain Pop English as a second language (ESL) program. However, supports and extensions are not always strategically planned, so that all learners, including English language learners (ELLs), have opportunities to be highly engaged and demonstrate critical thinking.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

The school's choice of curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that the needs of diverse student population are met.

Impact

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to ensure that curricula are Common Core aligned, thus promoting college and career readiness for all learners. The school's curricular adjustments, and embedded tasks that are cognitively engaging, meet all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The English language arts reading/writing curricular map is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards instructional shifts and assessments to ensure that students are academically successful. An integral part of the map is a direct Common Core Learning Standards alignment to social studies and science, a description of a performance task, format, and accompanying genre, to be used for each monthly plan. Successful strategies include text-based responses, promoting student conversations within the content lesson, and using protocols that are based upon the Paideia Based Socratic Seminar, thus promoting a student centered platform for discussion.
- Teachers reflect, revise, and refine work on the Socratic Method in instruction, which helps to show reflection of high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership, as evidenced during the grade level team session.
- Most lesson plans emphasize higher order thinking and provide a menu of strategies or resources from which students choose to help them understand the subject matter. For example, in a fourth grade science lesson plan, the teacher asked the students to use scientific tools to investigate their hypothesis and wonderings of rocks through scientific inquiry.
- Staff aligned all pre-existing curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and infused different programs and resources to meet the diverse student population. Resources, which serve as starting points for the work, includes the use of the Reggio Emilia inspired early childhood program that helps build a child centered curriculum tailored to students interests. In the early grades, classes are visibly rich with project based learning opportunities integrated through all areas of the curriculum around themes chosen by students based on documentation and data collection. Students explore new learning of reading, writing, math, social studies, and science through real world application and exploration, inquiry, and discovery. For example, in all pre-kindergarten classes, students built their knowledge about Africa through content-rich non-fiction and instructional texts. A Reggio Inspired Project on Africa was started from a conversation between students while in the classroom's building center.

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| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Well Developed |
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Findings

Teachers administer formative and summative assessments aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. During daily lessons they consistently engage in ongoing checks for understanding of taught concepts and consistently make instructional decisions that meet the needs of all students.

Impact

Teachers use ongoing checks for understanding, deliver actionable feedback, and make effective adjustments to curricula and instruction that meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers use and create English language arts, math, and content area rubrics, to provide written feedback to students. This is a consistent practice across the school, as evidenced by a fifth grade literacy task shared during the student meeting. For example, after studying the components of argumentative writing, students were asked to read the article, "Is Summer Break Necessary?" and write a persuasive letter to the governor supporting their position on the issue. The feedback for the student was based on a fifth grade Persuasive Writing rubric and cited specific next steps. Students stated that it is "easier for them to improve their writing and get good grades because they know how to apply the rules for writing and meet expectations".
- Across all classrooms, teachers engage the students in ongoing checks for understanding, student self-assessment, and goal setting. Teachers repeatedly ask questions during the delivery of lessons and analyze student responses to gauge student understanding. Furthermore, during the student meeting students shared their goals, both academic and social-emotional, highlighting what they know, what they need to do, and how they are able to self-assess their progress towards meeting their goals.
- All teachers engage in "Data Clinics" conversations with the administration. Specific student challenges are identified and teachers are responsible for creating, implementing, and evaluating action plans for all learners, including struggling and higher achieving students. Teachers discuss individual student progress with the administration several times during the year.

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

School leaders and staff partner with families in communicating expectations connected to a path of college readiness. Teacher teams have a clear culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of expectations for all students.

Impact

Structures that support high expectations, assure a culture of mutual accountability among staff members. As a result of teacher teams’ and staff members’ critical interventions and on-going provision of feedback and advisement, students have ownership of their own learning and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- In the parent meeting, every parent was able to speak to the school’s vision of educating the “minds and hearts” of all students through academic rigor, college and career readiness through the process of inquiry, discovery, and exploration, and a commitment to the whole child through social emotional development. A parent stated, “Journey Prep is kind of a private school in a public setting”. Another parent said: “The school provides a good foundation from the start, when the kids leave fifth grade, they are prepared to get accepted into good middle schools and high schools, they set high standards, the end goal is college”.
- Teacher teams have set high expectations for student feedback, within all subgroups, and have created student friendly rubrics and student reflection sheets that hold students accountable for review of their work, specific next steps, and timely follow up planning.
- Ongoing feedback to families is surfaced in monthly newsletters that outline curricula and assessments. Interim progress reports outline student progress and next steps for parents to support their children, parent workshops aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and a monthly ‘Homework Diner’ that brings all the stakeholders together to learn and dine together around the explicit needs of students, are further evidence of the school’s exemplary connections with families. Furthermore, parents stated that through email and open communication that involves students, teachers, and families, they are able to work with teachers to support their children at home and at outside of school experiences.