



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Bedford Park Elementary School

Elementary School X077

**3177 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Carolyn Heredia

**Date of review: April 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

The School Context

Bedford Park Elementary School is an elementary school with 113 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade kindergarten. The school population comprises 9% Black, 74% Hispanic, 12% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 28% English language learners and 12% 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 is not available due to new school status.

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	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	Focus	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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administration communicates high expectations to the staff and provides training and accountability structures. The faculty communicates expectations and provides feedback to families regarding student progress.

Impact

The communication of high expectations to teachers and families with accompanying supports to enhance opportunities to accelerate student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration uses the Advance system reports to identify teachers' individual areas of strength and need and uses this information to design action plans to support teachers in their professional development. For example, some teachers conduct prescribed inter-visitations while others attend targeted network and city-level professional development sessions that they use to turnkey instructional strategies with the rest of the staff.
- The principal provides professional literature that teachers are expected to read in preparation for discussions during professional learning sessions. The teachers are currently conducting a book study utilizing *Teach Like a Champion* by Doug Lemov to stimulate Monday afternoon professional development conversations.
- The school offers a dual language program as an enrichment model of education to prepare students for college and the careers of the 21st century. At this time, over 50% of the students engage in dual language learning. Service learning projects are explicitly integrated across curricula, and social studies units regularly highlight the careers of community professionals to promote active citizenship. In addition, global connections are emphasized across units to build strong knowledge about the world while teachers utilize structures such as task cards, checklists, management boards and choice time to promote independence.
- The school communicates with families regularly through letters, emails, and telephone calls to keep families abreast of the numerous workshops and celebratory events that take place in the school. Progress reports are issued between each of the three report card distributions listing the academic expectations for each benchmark period and offering specific recommendations parents can use to support their children at home. During the parent meeting, a pre-kindergartener's father shared how he used play-dough at home to strengthen his child's hands at the suggestion of the teacher, enabling his child's handwriting and fine-motor skills to improve significantly.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school's use of assessment data provides limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student mastery hindering efforts to make timely adjustments to curricula and instruction to accelerate student achievement. Teachers' assessment practices in the area of using checks for understanding are not yet consistently evident across classrooms.

Impact

Limited amounts of student work contain feedback and some students are not able to articulate what they are working on during lessons. Insufficient checks for understanding limits information to guide necessary instructional and curricular adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer benchmark assessments in reading five times per year utilizing running records and track the Fountas and Pinnell reading levels of their students. Performance tasks are administered in reading and math at the end of each unit to determine areas of need. The school uses rubrics for various writing genre and incorporates a writing checklist to help their young students establish healthy conventions of writing. Bulletin boards exhibit some student work that is rated based on a rubric with post-it displays offering next steps feedback and teachers conduct one on one conferences with students in reading, writing, and math to praise what students do well and establish next steps for learning. While students know their Fountas and Pinnell reading levels, they are unable to articulate what they need to work on to improve. Current feedback practices do not provide students with a clear picture of what they should be working on to accelerate their achievement.
- Teachers complete "focus for instruction" sheets after each benchmark assessment to group students according to similar needs and identify a focus along with a strategy to support each group. A math class exploring shapes organized students into five differentiated engagement groups based on prior student knowledge while an integrated co-teaching writing class neglected to follow their small group planning sheets resulting in Tier 1 students receiving Tier 2 visual supports while missing opportunities to extend their learning. This inconsistency of practice hinders efforts to make effective adjustments to meet student-learning needs.
- Across classrooms visited there was a disparity in teachers' use of checks for understanding. For the most part, teachers do not use varied checks for understanding during lessons. The majority of observed teachers' checks for understanding are based on students being able to explain their reasoning and findings while utilizing lesson vocabulary. Only some teachers used checklists to record their findings providing missed opportunities to use these data to track student learning and make instructional adjustments.
- Data binders are used across classes to track assessment data for students in each respective class, and teachers regularly conduct one on one conferences to recognize what students do well and to establish next step targets for individual students. Aside from the displayed reading trackers in each class that track student reading levels, data binders and conference notes are not organized as tracking tools to determine progress students are making towards goals across subject areas impeding efforts to adjust curricula and instruction.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Teachers are engaged in ongoing planning, alignment and integration of curricular programs to ensure instructional coherence, cognitive engagement and appropriate instructional support for each student.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted the core curriculum for English language arts (ELA) and math and uses the New York City Scope and Sequence for Social Studies and Science as a basic framework to build curricula and units of study across content areas. Teachers incorporate Foundations to build blending and syllabication skills and use the Teachers College Writing Units of Study to engage students in the five step writing process that culminates in published student work products. In addition, over 50% of students participate in a Spanish dual language program to prepare them to become bi-lingual, to promote cultural awareness and to develop oral language skills. Teachers design curricula that is hands-on with a focus on oral language development to create an exciting collaborative environment that motivates students to learn while meeting the unique needs of their pre-school and kindergarten population. All pedagogues have met during summer training programs and continue to meet almost daily to collaborate to plan curricula that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The school emphasizes ELA shifts 4 & 6 (text-based answers and academic vocabulary) and math shifts 2 & 6 (coherence and dual intensity).
- Sample curriculum maps and unit plans reflect focal CCLS, essential questions, big ideas, vocabulary, content/skills, service learning goals, performance-based culminating tasks, and provide menus of technology and material resources to scaffold instruction to accommodate students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). Service learning goals are purposely integrated into the curricula to promote real world connections. For example, a cross-curricular unit on the environment/home/community prompts students to translate their ideas and findings into appropriate actions to improve conditions by creating posters that communicate the rules of the school for public display.
- Teachers use a recommended lesson plan format that includes a content objective, a language objective, higher order guiding questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy, vocabulary, building background, assessment, strategies and a description of the lesson delivery components while embedding the instructional shifts across subjects to build coherence and promote college and career readiness. In addition, teachers create action plans that identify an area of focus and two to three strategies to address the needs of students.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, instructional practices do not regularly incorporate effective questioning strategies and scaffolds to provide multiple entry points, and student discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Inconsistent use of effective questioning, appropriate instructional scaffolds and discussion techniques limits student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classes, teachers ask probing questions to push student thinking that require students to use higher-level academic vocabulary. For example, in a math class exploring two-dimensional shapes, students are asked to create a square using four popsicle sticks. When asked to describe a square, students explain that a square has four equal sides by pointing to the popsicle sticks and identifying the four corners as vertices based on the front-loaded vocabulary scaffold conducted earlier in the lesson. The teacher then asked students if they could create a square using only three popsicle sticks and why. On the other hand, in a social studies lesson on neighborhoods, the teacher displayed community workers and asked students to describe their roles and responsibilities. When a student answered that mail carriers deliver letters that are important to families, the teacher agreed with him without exploring his reasoning with a probing question like, "Why are letters important to families?" leading to a missed opportunity to push student thinking and oral language expression. Low-level questioning in some other classes resulted in limited single-word responses, while in some classes teachers provided desired answers for students in order to move the lesson along.
- Appropriate instructional scaffolds such as visuals, graphic organizers, videos, front-loaded vocabulary and manipulatives such as play dough, sandboxes, and popsicle sticks were used by many teachers. For example, a pre-kindergarten science lesson on the characteristics of trees in our community engaged students in a finger play where they made believe that their bodies were trees followed up by students forming small groups to create trees using various materials. Students in a kindergarten science class explored properties by changing the color of a piece of fabric in small groups utilizing dye and droppers. However, in a math class the limited use of available and appropriate tools diminished the accuracy and effectiveness of the lesson when the teacher asked students to compare squares to circles while providing them only with sample squares and not sample circles, causing confusion for some students.
- Effective use of the "turn and talk" strategy for sharing ideas was observed in some classrooms. For instance, a teacher used multiple "turn and talks" during a lesson about neighborhood workers enabling students to become highly engaged, excited about their learning and able to articulate what they were learning and why they were learning it. On the other hand, a reading mini-lesson on identifying major events in a story employed teacher-centered direct instruction in which verbal interactions were mostly teacher to student and student to teacher. In a class on non-fictional "how to" writing, too much "modeling" decreased opportunities for student engagement and brainstorming within arranged student groupings. Accountable talk stems are used inconsistently across classrooms producing discussions across the school that reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

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

The majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that are focused on the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards instructional shifts and the attainment of school wide goals. Distributed leadership structures are in place, allowing teachers to have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact

Teacher team meetings allow teachers to collaborate in analyzing performance trends and developing strategies to address students' needs. Distributed leadership structures provide opportunities for teacher leadership and input in school level decision making.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers meet two to three times each week and almost daily in sub-teams to refine curricula and instructional practices to meet the student needs of their very young population, to establish routines that foster sound classroom management, and to develop strategies that raise students to the next level. Current Advance data indicates that the instructional capacity of teachers is improving in measured Danielson framework components over time.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers analyzed students' persuasive/argumentative writing pieces examining writing samples at different levels of performance. Using a rubric based on the six traits of writing, teachers worked in pairs to identify trends noticed in their respective student work pieces with the intention of identifying teaching points for each level of instruction (Tier 1/whole group, Tier 2/small group, Tier 3/one-on-one conference). Each of the three teacher pairs looked closely at one level of student work across high, medium and low student work samples to ensure that strategies were devised that would help students of varying abilities. Team members used a protocol to look at student work that highlighted their comparison of rubric expectations to the actual student work and noted strengths, areas for improvement / trends and next steps strategies. Due to the very young age of their subjects, early inquiry work focused on very basic trends such as students' understanding letter-sound relationships, forming words, and then using these words to build sentences. The trend that came to light during this meeting was the fact that students are having trouble thinking of ideas to write about. Teachers discussed the idea of explicit modeling of the brainstorming process and the use of exemplars as possible strategies to use to augment student thinking.
- Teachers have many opportunities for leadership development. Team members take turns facilitating teacher team meetings. Teachers regularly engage in collaborative planning and make adaptations to the curriculum to meet the needs of students. The principal provides open sessions for staff to collaborate with her in designing units of study that align to CCLS, content standards and instructional shifts. Teachers assume leadership roles in reviewing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), recommending changes to the school wide behavior expectation guide, engaging in curriculum mapping, and analyzing school wide data.