



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Donald Hertz School

Elementary-Middle X083

950 Rhineland Avenue

Bronx

NY 10462

Principal: Brandon Muccino

Date of review: May 4, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Jeremy Kabinoff, Ed.D.

The School Context

P.S. 83, the Donald Hertz School is a K-8 school with 1700 students from grades kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 9% Black, 50% Hispanic, 31% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.0%.

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	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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction and create opportunities for professional learning and support as aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school partners with families to effectively communicate expectations towards college and career readiness.

Impact

The school's supportive structures to achieve high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability and support for student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to staff through the P.S. 83 professional development plan calendar as well as by providing frequent cycles of professional learning opportunities based on teacher performance data. In addition, the principal upkeeps a public Danielson Framework bulletin board where examples of professional learning opportunities and minutes from training sessions are posted publicly. The school's instructional focus is based on the questioning and discussion domain from the Danielson Framework. Furthermore, the principal and his instructional staff have developed a professional learning opportunity plan based on the Framework and Measures of Teacher Practice data. In addition, the professional development information is accessible via the school's Google Doc site and posted via the internet. Furthermore, staff post information via Google Docs based on their reflections and/or their feedback toward the professional development sessions. Lastly, staff uploads their work via Google Docs based on the Danielson Framework and other professional learning opportunities to enable the principal and his instructional cabinet to make adjustments or enhance staff professional development sessions throughout the school year.
- The school communicates high expectations via the use of Datacation, a web-based grading and communication system. The program enables access to grades, as well as email and dialogue. Parents and students stated that they can see the assignments as well as their grades and teacher anecdotal entries. Furthermore, progress reports are generated through the program at any point during the school year. Parents stated they know their child's progress toward goals on a regular basis and do not need to wait for an update. Furthermore, parents are able to communicate with teachers on a daily basis regarding their child's academics as well as their behavioral progress as well.
- The school promotes college and career readiness through a partnership with Kaplan by offering students in grades 7 and 8 an opportunity to participate in the afterschool Specialized High School Preparatory program. In addition, the school offers two Regents classes, Earth Science and Integrated Algebra. Furthermore, the school offers family workshops with regard to the high school application process, high school fairs, and career fairs. Additionally, an established partnership with the New York Yankees promotes health and culinary arts careers. The school works with students in grade 8 regarding the portfolio and audition process for schools that require such prerequisites.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While a majority of teachers use the workshop model to create multiple entry points and provide students with opportunities to engage in group work and text-based discussion, student-centered instruction is not yet a deeply embedded practice in a few classrooms.

Impact

There are missed opportunities to further engage all students in tasks that push them to further engage in higher-order thinking and take ownership of their learning across all content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers' use questioning techniques to engage students in higher-level discussions resulting in meaningful student participation. For example, in a grade 7 English language arts (ELA) classroom the teacher followed up with a student's response by fielding the question to another student for a reaction. Additionally, in a grade 3 math class the teacher followed-up one student's response with probing questions and phrases such as "Why", "Tell me how you know" and "Think about how you can put Michelle's response into your own words". Although there was evidence of student-led discussion around finding the measure of central tendency and the range of numbers in a grade 5 math class, students inside a grade 7 English language arts grade classroom displayed inconsistencies around student-to-student discussions on "*The Hudson*" text.
- While problem-solving activities require students to show demonstration of their understanding of their work products that are included in teacher lesson plans, across classrooms scaffolded activities do not strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports. For example, in a social studies grade 6 classroom student discussion reflected ownership as one student selected the student groups to discuss an array of question prompts through Socratic Seminar. Similarly in a grade 2 ELA classroom comprised of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), the students were required to complete a differentiated set of leveled character trait charts. Yet, in a grade 6 Social Studies classroom, all students were reading from the same text and working with the same graphic organizer, leaving some students without access to the material as they demonstrated off-task behavior.
- Across classrooms student discussions inconsistently reflected high levels of thinking. Some teachers afforded students opportunities to engage in conversations as evidenced by the Socratic Seminar in the grade 6 ELA class where a student facilitator selected students to participate in the "Fish Bowl" activity. However, a grade 5 math classroom required students to work in groups using an alternative strategy that enables students to multiply triple-digit numbers to solve the multiplication problem. Yet students worked individually at a table sitting together, with no evidence of accountable talk.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits across grades and subjects for all students.

Impact

The school's curricular purposeful decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks challenge student thinking and are accessible for a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school promotes college and career readiness throughout the curricula by embedding citing evidence to support arguments and determining the theme or central idea of a text across grades kindergarten through 8 and subject areas include math, English language arts, science and social studies. For example, a grade 2 unit plan requires students to list elements of the story in sequence using evidence to support the order while a grade 8 unit plan demonstrates that students need to cite key textual details to support analysis of what the text states based on the unit "Survival".
- A review of written lesson plans across all content areas reveals that in-class summative tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills. For example, a grade 5 lesson plan requires students to evaluate peer's higher-order thinking with a question requiring their use of evidence to defend their ideas, developing logical arguments, analyzing information from multiple sources, and applying concepts in real-world situations. Additionally, a grade 6 English language arts lesson plan engages students in a carousel activity in which groups move from one station to another and complete four different comprehension questions where students cite relevant text evidence.
- The school has adopted Ready Gen, Go Math for the elementary grades and the upper grades have adopted Codex and CMP3 curricula for English language arts and math respectively. Staff adapts these curricula to ensure that all students have access. Furthermore, the staff adapts materials from EngageNY and Teacher's College to support by filling in gaps in the curricula to meet the needs of all students, especially English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. All lesson plans reflect multiple entry points, such as tiered questions, purposeful grouping and higher-order thinking. All lesson plans in all subject areas and grades reflect the teacher-created and accepted daily planning tool, called the "Inquiry Guided Curriculum Planning" tool.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned to the school's curricula. Assessment practices consistently incorporate the use of ongoing checks for understanding and self and peer reflection.

Impact

The use of assessments, rubrics and grading policy provide students and teachers with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Daily reflections and checks for understanding lead to effective instructional adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Assessments are given in the form of end-of-unit tests and performance assessments that ask students to work on authentic problems and solve them by showing their thought processes. At intervals throughout the year, students participate in assessments such as Fountas and Pinnell running records and Measures of Student Learning (MOSLs). Mid-way through the school year, students take a benchmark assessment in math and ELA to enable staff to determine whether students are making growth as well as teachers creating intervention based action plans to address areas of weaknesses.
- Teachers collaborate to create genre-specific student-friendly rubrics used as a source of data that leads to individualized student conferencing and flexible student grouping. These rubrics are accompanied by agreed-upon "praise and next steps" feedback formats that are consistent across grade bands. For example, lower grades use "star" and "a wish" forms while upper grades write directly on the rubric with "commendations" and "next time" comments. For example a third grade assignment in mathematics had star and "wish" commendations such as "star-highlighting excellence in organization and neatness" and "wish-mentioning to present a more complete explanation using math terms and reasoning". Similarly in a sixth grade math assignment demonstrated feedback on the level of student proficiency along with commendations such as great demonstration of how you solved the problem demonstrating the steps of solving an algebraic equation and actionable feedback based on explaining how you derived at your response. Teachers ensure that these rubrics are aligned to the school-wide adopted texts, Ready Gen, Go Math, Codex and CMP3 curricula.
- The school's instructional focus of "assessing for understanding" Danielson 3d, via the use of the exit slip was evident across classrooms. On a daily basis, teachers use exit slips in all subject areas in order to assess whether students have mastered the objective for the day. For example, in a fifth grade class the exit slip was evidenced by the teacher requiring the students to fill the slip out at the conclusion of the lesson. Similarly, in a grade 8 class, the previous day's exit slip was addressed at the beginning of the lesson as part of the warm up to clarify any misunderstandings before building on them. In addition, other forms of assessing for understanding were evident as well as evidenced by questions prompts through the Depth of Knowledge, student responses, think-pair-share as well as teachers circulating and recording evidence inside the room. In the lower elementary classes visited grades kindergarten, two, and three, teachers tracked students' responses in group discussions to check for understanding and adjusted teaching based on these results.

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

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed teacher leadership is embedded across all areas of the school

Impact

School-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners is seen throughout all classrooms. Teachers play an integral part of school-wide decisions that affect curriculum and teaching across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, professional collaborations as evidenced by the school's wide array of teams including the school's inquiry teams, instructional leadership team and school leadership team, which meet weekly. The teams analyze student data, establish professional learning opportunities, communicate with families, and develop plans of action to promote academic rigor, and student achievement. The grade 5 teacher team looked at samples of leveled student work to determine areas of strengths and weakness and agreed to a series of next steps. The team decided to focus on tier two vocabulary since it was determined by the grade 5 teacher team that these students were having difficulty with what the questions were asking. Teachers in grade 5 stated that student work samples demonstrated issues around the school-wide writing trait tracker that assisted students in citing evidence to support their arguments.
- Teachers from the grade 5 vertical team stated they began a "Command of Evidence" initiative across the elementary grades. In response to the grade 5 vertical team modeling this initiative, other grades have since planned and devised strategies focusing on academic vocabulary and implemented strategies such as picture drawings, pre-teaching, and word-of-the-day in the other grades. The impact from the "Command of Evidence" initiative demonstrated that 70% of students while 80% of ELLs made growth as well.
- Each teacher team has a teacher leader who meets weekly with the administration. Teams range from grade teams, content teams, inquiry teams and pupil personnel teams comprised of members of the School Based Support team as well as key constituents affiliated with all other aspects of student support. Information shared from administration is turn-keyed to staff during the team meetings and/or during professional development sessions. Teacher leaders and teachers stated that they have a powerful voice in key instructional decisions and stated that their findings are taken into consideration. A group of grade 8 teachers stated they had the opportunity to present their work on vertical planning and coordination to grade 7 teachers, based on grade 7 students experiencing difficulty with ratios. A teacher on grade 8 stated she impacted the school by initiating a practice for the other grades to focus the inquiry on a cycle of 'what is taught', 'what should be taught', and 'overall grade expectations'. This practice is now implemented each time teachers meet. Teachers from grade 7 mentioned that they began a parent-outreach tool that informs parents of their child's progress in their major subject areas along with suggested modes of support for learning at home through literature and individualized progress reports.