



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Samuel Randall

Elementary School X138

**2060 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Lorraine Carrol-Dawkins

**Date of review: May 1, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

The School Context

The Samuel Randall School is an elementary school with 807 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 27% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 4% 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 89.0%.

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	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	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, provides training to teachers and families, and has established accountability structures. The faculty communicates expectations and provides feedback to students and their families to support increased student progress.

Impact

All teachers are aware of and receive varied supports that enable them to meet the high expectations placed upon them. Families understand expectations for their children and how they can help them make progress towards learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents praise the high level of communication they receive from school staff regarding the progress of their children through progress reports, phone calls and flyers that announce special events and parent workshop listings. They support their children's academic progress at home through the use of online resources, like readtheory.org and readworks.org. Both websites were introduced to them through parent training sessions held at the school. Frequent and on-going parental workshops in literacy, numeracy, the Arts, and college and career readiness help parents understand the rigors of the Common Core Learning Standards and provide hands-on strategies parents can use at home to support their children's learning. For example, during the parent meeting several participants shared the fact that they regularly partner read with their children using visual illustrations to predict story content and utilize context clues strategies with their children to determine the meaning of unknown vocabulary, both strategies that were taught to them during parent workshops. These practices enable the school to successfully partner with families to support student progress.
- Teachers are provided with ongoing professional development that focuses on Domain 3 (Instruction) of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders utilize the expertise of coaches, consultants and network staff to communicate high instructional expectations. Videos are used to demonstrate specific Danielson Framework component practices that are followed up with school-wide walkthroughs attended by administrators, teachers, network staff and support personnel. Administrators consistently use data from formal and informal observations based on the Danielson Framework to provide teachers with feedback that informs them of the quality of their work while providing next steps for improvement for which teachers are held accountable in follow-up visits. Teachers routinely complete teacher lesson reflections that are shared with administrators to ensure deep discussion aligned to Danielson Framework expectations.
- Teachers use Class Dojo to communicate with parents daily about student progress. Parents stated that using the Class Dojo application on their phone has made it much easier for them to contact their children's teacher and that teachers respond quickly. One parent in particular felt that the app was invaluable because her child's teacher used it to decrease negative behaviors and elicit positive behaviors for her child. As a result of the use of this communication tool, her child is displaying behaviors that positively affects learning on a more consistent basis.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

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 leads to uneven student thinking and participation for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

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 perimeter and two-dimensional shapes, students are asked to create different shapes of the same perimeter using popsicle sticks. As students work in pairs, the teacher moves around the room listening to the groups work and uses a combination of support questions such as, "What perimeter does your shape need to have?" and expanded student response questions like, "How are the figures you made the same and how are they different?" to push student thinking at all levels of ability. On the other hand, in a math lesson on completing tables to determine a rule and write an expression, the teacher uses predominantly low-level questioning requiring one word answers without probing student responses such as, "What is the variable?" and "What is the operation?". In some other 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 popsicle sticks were used by many teachers. For example, the teacher of a kindergarten science lesson on classifying and identifying things as living and non-living used a doll and a live fish to stimulate conversation and elicit the properties of living and non-living things. In a self-contained special education bridge class, live translation by a paraprofessional and translated versions enabled English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) to participate. However, the visuals projected to help students with challenging vocabulary were insufficient to enable some students to use context clues to determine word meaning because they were unable to decode surrounding words. Consequently, classrooms across grades and subjects inconsistently use individualized teaching scaffolds or extensions for learners. As a result, some students are given limited opportunities to experience differentiated applications for access to learning.
- Effective use of the collaborative pairing and student grouping as a strategy for sharing ideas was observed in some classrooms. For instance, a teacher organized her fourth grade class into four student groups in a lesson about resource conservation while a kindergarten teacher used multiple "turn and talks" during a mini-lesson, enabling students in both classes to become highly engaged, excited about their learning and able to articulate what they were learning. On the other hand, a reading mini-lesson on text features such as table of contents, glossary and pictures employed teacher-centered direct instruction in which verbal interactions were mostly teacher to student and student to teacher.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leader and staff have made purposeful decisions to adopt the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts aligning them curricula across subjects. The curriculum ensures rigorous habits and higher-order skills that are tailored to provide access to all learners.

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 uses Literacy by Design and Reading Reform in grades prekindergarten-1 and Ready gen Literacy in grades 2-5 as a basis to design Common Core aligned English language arts (ELA) curricula incorporating Writers' Workshop strategies. Macmillan math is used in the lower grades and Envision Math is used with Engage NY math modules in grades 2-5 to support math fluency needs and the instructional shifts. New York City scope and sequence serve as the school's curricula for social studies and science. Science is supplemented with the Foss scientific thinking process activities that use hands on investigations to ensure students "learn by doing". The school's decision to use Ready Gen and Engage NY is due to their rigorous demands to meet the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards and promote college and career readiness for all learners.
- Lesson plans in all content areas reinforce higher order thinking and include differentiated materials and scaffolds to ensure that all learners, including ELLs and SWDs, can participate in and complete tasks. A 4th grade science lesson plan on Natural Resource Conservation is designed around Depth of Knowledge levels two, three and four activities utilizing a Smart board interactive video, posted vocabulary, various recyclable item like cans, plastic bottles, and boxes, and a graphic organizer for sorting recyclable items. Students are organized into four heterogeneous groups with specific roles to research answers to higher order questions aligned to their groups' assigned section of the science textbook article. After the groups have completed their activity they will share out, add to their KWL charts and use graphic organizers to create a plan for classroom conservation through recycling. In addition, the lesson plan contains pre-meditated open-ended questions for each of the student groups to use to facilitate their thinking.
- The refinement of curriculum and instruction, led the school to purchase Ready gen literacy program to support the ELA instructional shifts and provide students with opportunities for rich discussions and deep analysis of literature. Teachers use the *Ready Gen Scaffolded Strategies* handbook and create their own stratagem to support ELLs and struggling readers. For example, a 4th grade research unit on exploring impacts and effects requires students to write informational news reports that examine effects of change to the earth's surface utilizing a volcano anchor text and supporting texts on erosion and Pompeii. Teachers accommodate struggling students in this endeavor by having them draw diagrams with labels and captions that the students link to quotations from the unit articles. Eventually, students use this organizational information to craft several paragraphs to explain the benefits and dangers of volcanic eruptions.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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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 throughout the year utilizing running records to track the Fountas and Pinnell reading levels of their students. The school uses a combination of rubrics and checklists for various writing genre and tasks. Bulletin boards exhibit student work that is rated based on a rubric with post-it displays offering next steps feedback and teachers conference with students in reading, writing, and math to take assessment notes. While students know their Fountas and Pinnell reading levels, they are unable to articulate current goals or 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.
- Across classrooms, check-ins for student understanding was not steadily observed across classes and subjects. During a fourth grade science lesson, the teacher detected confusion on the part of her students regarding their understanding of what natural resources are and what conservation means. The teacher immediately adjusted the lesson layout by asking clarifying questions to redirect students and reinforce necessary conceptual understanding. On the other hand, during a social studies lesson about families and members of communities helping each other, a student displayed confusion when he shared his idea of helping a cat instead of a community member. The teacher moved on by projecting an exit slip on the whiteboard and proceeded to question and model appropriate answers for students to copy, rendering the exit slip useless as a tool to monitor student understanding. In the majority of the classes, teachers taught whole group instruction and students either listened or responded to the teacher. In a few classes, the teacher conferred with students at tables and provided feedback to the whole group. However, in many other classrooms, teachers circulate as students work, but this practice of roving check-ins did not yield adjustments to lessons or mid-lesson interruptions to share teacher observations that reinforce or redirect student thinking to keep them on track.
- The school uses a variety of common assessments, such as Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), end of unit performance assessments, simulation ELA and math item analysis, and Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) in math, reading and non-fiction writing that are administered as pre-, mid-, and post measures of student learning. However, while these common assessments are in place, they are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction. For example, an upper grade math lesson required all students to perform the same series of simple tasks to complete tables, determine a rule and write expressions. Many students stated that the task was very easy and appeared bored, indicating missed opportunities to use pre-assessment data to differentiate activities and extend student learning.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently conduct data analysis and reviews of student work. Distributed leadership structures are in place, allowing teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

Teacher collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers. Teacher team meetings allow teachers to collaborate in analyzing performance trends and developing strategies to address students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet during weekly common planning periods to conduct inquiry meetings, plan instruction based on student data, and look at student work together. In addition, all team members meet together as sub-groups during common preparation time and lunch and use email to share their learning with each other. All teams have established norms and protocols and include teacher's roles within teams as recorders, facilitators, and timekeepers. Teacher team members facilitate class intervisitations as part of their capacity building practices and teaching practices are monitored using Advance data from cycles of observation.
- Teacher teams review student assessment data on grade teams, monitor student progress, and identify supports and instructional revisions to support student learning. A 5th grade teacher team was observed analyzing student work from the MOSL mid-year math assessment on problem solving. While noting some positive computational abilities, team members pointed out that the student has trouble identifying the order of operations due to vocabulary issues. Teachers discuss teaching strategies that include modeling word problem strategies, using the fishbowl backwards method, and using a problem solving graphic organizer to accelerate students' problem solving abilities.
- Teachers have many opportunities for leadership development. Team members take turns facilitating teacher team meetings and serving as timekeepers and recorders. Teachers regularly engage in collaborative planning and make adaptations to the curriculum to meet the needs of students. In addition, teachers take on the responsibility for developing and creating assessments based upon data. As a result of these structures, teachers feel that they have a true voice in key decisions that affect student learning.