

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Dr. Selman Waksman School**

**Elementary School X178**

**850 Baychester Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10475**

**Principal: Deborah Levine**

**Date of review: January 16, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

## The School Context

Dr. Selman Waksman School is an elementary school with 474 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 63% Black, 29% Hispanic, 6% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The majority of teachers engaged in inquiry-based collaborative teacher team meetings to enhance the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and the attainment of school wide goals. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

### Impact

The implementation of an inquiry-based approach and distributed leadership structures supports teams' on-going focus on the attainment of school wide goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a fourth grade teacher team meeting teachers were observed engaging in the "Looking Collaboratively Student Work" protocol as they analyzed a student writing sample from the English Language Art benchmark assessment. The facilitator identified a prevalent trend in student response writing reflected a lack of textual evidence to support claims. The presenting teacher distributed the writing sample and participants were timed as they analyzed and annotated the work. Teachers then engaged in describing the work, interpreting the work and sharing implications for further instruction (next steps).
- With a focus on school wide goal # 2, which states, "By June 2015, all students in grades 3-5 will demonstrate progress towards achieving state standards as measured by a 2% increase in students scoring at levels 3 and 4 on the NYS ELA assessment." the fourth grade teacher team shared that they consistently look at trends. Using a 5-trait rubric Informative Writing rubric as the tool of measure, teachers noticed a lot of students were scoring 2 to 2.5 in the "development" trait. Teachers articulated that their present focus in the area of informational response writing is "development" and they are working strategically to push students who are scoring level 2 to level 3 and level 4.
- Within teacher teams, there is a distributed leadership structure that facilitates the work. At the meeting observed, the presenting educator shared the student work sample, the facilitator ran the meeting, the recorder entered the findings on the documenter form and the United Federation of Teachers teacher center coach provided guidance and resources. Other roles are researcher and data person. The documenter form is shared with the school leaders weekly.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The school is developing systems to provide feedback to families regarding student progress. Teacher teams communicate high expectations to students and are developing feedback and guidance supports to help prepare students for the next level.

### Impact

Parents feel limited support due to the reported lack of communication regarding student progress and the standards.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parents expressed little knowledge of the Common Core Learning Standards and stated that there is a lack of training in this area. Moreover, during the parent interview, parents stated that they have very little contact with the principal and have not received sufficient information regarding their children's progress.
- The principal submitted the following artifacts reflecting school/family communication: PowerPoint Overview referencing the Common Core, school wide curricula and school wide programs – presented by the literacy and math coach, PS 178 Parent Handbook, parent newsletter – September and November, Citizen of the Month Recognition Ceremony agendas for October and December, announcements of two school plays at the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade levels,
- Upon analysis of a writing rubric a teacher team determined that the language was confusing and did not provide students clear insight into what they had mastered or the next steps. Teachers worked on modifying the rubric to provide a better feedback tool for students.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

As ensured by school leaders and faculty, the Common Core-aligned curricula are coherent and foundational in the development of college and career readiness skills for all students. Modification of curriculum and instruction based upon analysis of student work and data provides greater access and engagement of thinking skills for all students.

### Impact

The implementation and modification of Common Core-aligned curricula engages students in higher-order thinking and promotes college and career readiness skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- The Go Math curriculum requires students to engage in the Common Core-aligned strategy of using varied problem-solving strategies on the concrete, representational and abstract level, as evidenced in lesson planning and through student work samples.
- Teachers shared that analysis of the Ready Gen curriculum revealed that the curriculum-based whole-class trade book for each unit exceeded the reading levels of a significant percentage of students within each class. Teachers' lesson plans include academic vocabulary building scaffolds and guided reading plans that support students in meeting college and career readiness anchor standards such as CCRA.R.1 – “Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text” and CCRA.R.4 – Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- The principal stated that analysis of school wide data revealed a significant deficit across the grades in vocabulary. School leaders have instituted a “Word of the Day” instructional program wherein students are expected to define the word and use it in context throughout the course of the day.
- Lesson plans reflect learning objectives, learning targets, essential question, whole-class engagement, vocabulary, discussion questions, group work, differentiation strategies and groups and assessment.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

The Danielson Framework for teaching informs the school's beliefs about how students learn best and guides the curricula-aligned instructional practices. Across classrooms higher-order thinking skills are elicited through students' engagement in appropriately challenging tasks via multiple entry points.

### **Impact**

Student discussion, explicit teaching, multi-modality learning and the use of scaffolds provides multiple entry points for student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, students were engaged in student to student discussion in small groups or shared ideas with a focus on providing textual evidence, as they turned and talked to their discussion partners. For example, in a fourth grade class, as the teacher read a poem aloud, students jotted figurative phrases and sentences that they heard and shared their analyses with their partners after the reading.
- In a third grade special education class, the teacher provided explicit modeling and then guided students in turning to their neighbor to explain the difference between a fact and an opinion. The SMARTboard provided visual illustrations to scaffold student thinking. The teacher used positive reinforcement in response to each partnerships answer, affirming students for their correct responses as well as attempts. In addition, the teacher instructed students to use non-verbal responses as such: hands on head to indicate fact and hands on hips to indicate opinion.
- Across classrooms, the use of common scaffolds to provide entry points into student writing was observed, such as the OREO process. O stands for opinion, R stands for reason, E stands for evidence and O stands for opinion (restated). Students were observed using this device to organize their writing in three classrooms across the grades in general education and special education classes.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Data from common assessments are used to adjust instruction and curriculum. Teachers instructional adjustments are informed by the use of ongoing checks for understanding

### Impact

Consistent data analysis and ongoing checks for understanding inform instructional and curricular adjustments.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team members shared that teachers analyze the ReadyGen and Go Math units to ensure alignment and coherence. When gaps are identified teachers have either shifted parts of units or chapters and/or developed supplementary instructional materials and activities to fortify necessary pre-requisite skills. For example, upon analysis of the Go Math curriculum, second grade teachers noted that chapter 1; Critical Area 1 was place value. The baseline assessment data reflected that students needed foundational support within this strand. The math coach provided hands-on learning tasks to scaffold students' place value skills before teachers launched into chapter 1.
- Teachers track reading progress using the Developmental Reading Assessment. Five times a year teachers administer the assessment and the data is analyzed to determine where students fall into the following five categories: "at risk", "should make it", "on standard", and "exceeds standard". Through the response to intervention team students are designated for Tier 1, Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions based upon this and other performance-based assessment data.
- At the school wide level, student progress in math and English language arts is monitored through item analyses of performance based assessments through Schoolnet. This data is then collated and disaggregated into individual class profiles and teachers on each grade use it to inform instructional planning.
- Across classrooms, teachers circulated to observe and assess students as they engaged in independent and group work. In one classroom as the teacher circulated she noticed that several students were struggling with using a graphic organizer to develop their opinion-writing essays. She interrupted the independent work to reteach and model the effective use of the rubric in the pre-write stage of the essay.
- Teachers develop exit ticket tasks that students must complete at the end of each class session. Teachers analyze the exit tickets to determine which students need further support with each concept taught. Identified students are grouped for a targeted strategy lesson within on the following instructional day.