



Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 212

Elementary - Middle School X212

**1180 Tinton Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Gloria Ford Anderson

**Date of review: April 17, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rafaela Espinal**

The School Context

P.S. 212 is an elementary-middle school with 490 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 38% Black, 59% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 9% 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 90.0%.

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	Developing
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

The principal consistently communicates high expectations to the entire staff, provides training, and has a system of accountability for set expectations. School community members consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Impact

All teachers, staff, and students and their families are well supported towards meeting expectations and families understand the school's expectations for their children.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal established a professional learning plan for all pedagogues to strengthen teacher practice. Throughout the school year teachers participate in on-going differentiated professional learning sessions that are aligned to the Daniel Framework for Teaching and to a range of instructional foci including lesson planning clinics, student engagement in learning, behavior management strategies, use of questioning and discussion techniques to assess and deepen student understanding, goal setting for students with disabilities, and analysis of student data, writing, language and content goals to support English language learners.
- At the beginning of the year, school leaders set high expectations and a system of accountability for teachers by strategically scheduling observations based on previous teachers' ratings and students outcomes. Accordingly, teachers stated that the frequent classroom observations and feedback they received from school leaders helps to identify their next steps and areas for growth. They stated the feedback is specific, timely, and aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- Parents reported that the principal has an open door policy and is available to them as needed. They reported that teachers convey the importance of students explaining their answers and justifying their thinking with evidence. The parents indicated that the school engages them in four extended parent/teacher conference during the school year (September, November, January, and March). During these meetings, parents and teachers review student work products, discuss next steps, and collaborate to develop a plan of action that bridges the gap between home and school with student achievement as the central focus.
- Teachers reported that, throughout the school year, they engage in reciprocal communication with parents during and beyond the Tuesday parent sessions to maintain communication regarding students' progress. Furthermore, parents and students were also in agreement that teachers offer ongoing feedback to help them understand student progress towards meeting their instructional goals.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and challenging tasks to engage all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities. High-level student work products and discussions were evident across some classrooms.

Impact

Unevenness in teacher pedagogy and in use of effective scaffolding deters students' full participation in challenging academic tasks that yield discussions and work products that demonstrate higher order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Evidence of student discussions was observed in some classrooms. For example, in a fifth grade English language arts (ELA) class, students worked in groups discussing strategies to synthesize notes as the teacher supported each group by guiding students and pushing them to think and reflect on their previous learning. However, in other classes, discussions were teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher in pattern, thus providing limited opportunity for most students to demonstrate their thinking. For example, in an English as a second language class, students worked in groups; however, tasks given to the groups were not structured to promote high levels of discussions.
- In a fifth grade math class, the teacher implemented differentiated instructional strategies to engage all students in solving for an inequality. Students used graphic organizers, manipulatives, visuals, language supports, and peer and teacher support as well. However, in other classrooms, the same work was set for every student regardless of their ability level with work assignments that were not differentiated nor included supports to address the needs of special education students, English language learners, and high achieving students. For example, in a seventh grade science class, all students worked on the same assignment about cell theory where higher achievers finished before the rest of the class. Once they were done with the task, there were no extension activities to maximize their instructional time and students were left waiting while other students finished.
- In a fifth grade English class, students worked in groups on "unique things in the rainforest". Even though the teacher circulated and asked questions, there was inconsistent evidence of higher-order questioning to promote student higher-order thinking skills.
- In an eighth grade English class, the teacher scaffolded the content to provide all students with an entry point to discuss and analyze different approaches to find word meaning by using multiple sources. However, in some classes, English language learners were not provided with scaffolds or tasks that provided them with an entry point that they could manage given their language proficiency. For example, in a sixth grade math class, four English language learners had to consistently ask their peers what was going on because they were unable to keep up with the work being discussed in class.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and the instructional shifts. Although curricula and academic tasks reflect planning to offer students access to the curricula, such planning still provides inconsistent opportunities for student access.

Impact

Curricula does not yet reflect coherence across the entire school to promote college and career ready skills and cognitively engaging tasks for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership and staff opted into Expeditionary Learning (upper grades) and Core Knowledge (lower grades) for English Language Arts since these curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. In math, the school opted to use Common Core aligned curricula Go Math (lower grades), CMP3 (upper grades), and Engage NY modules. The principal established a school-wide integration of specific instructional shifts by choosing to focus on emphasizing acquisition of academic vocabulary and organization in writing, and a focus on numeric fluency to support math learning. However, during some classroom visits, students were observed copying information and graphic organizers, responding to questions in their notebooks, and working in a compliant, passive manner on assigned tasks. Although curricula and lesson plans target key standards aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards units of study, the academic tasks and lessons observed did not consistently provide students access to the curricula and tasks to cognitively engage all learners across all grades and subjects.
- A review of lesson plans submitted showed that some teachers are incorporating student instructional groupings in their lesson plans. For example, groupings for a sixth grade math class was based on math levels, learning styles, and socialization skills. In a sixth grade English lesson plan, the teacher grouped English language learners in tiers with specific roles such as language captains or language partners. Furthermore, some teachers included specific learning targets for students with disabilities and English language learners in their instructional plans. However, the implementation of these practices across the school is inconsistent.
- In a sixth grade English lesson plan, the teacher noted strategies to assign students with specific roles within their groups to ensure that each member of the group completes and shares their work. Each member of the group was responsible for knowing all the answers to each question. Furthermore, the teacher designed a color-coded system for groups to communicate to inform the teacher when help is needed. However, this type of group structure and protocols was inconsistent in reviewed lesson plans.
- While the school transitions their work to align to the instructional shifts, some lesson plans emphasize higher order thinking and provide a menu of strategies or leveled resources from which scholars utilize or choose helping them to better understand the subject matter or content areas. For example, an eighth grade ELA lesson plan used students' data and describes in detail the purpose for each group and the expected learning outcomes. However, this practice is not consistent across grades and subjects.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments that are not well aligned to the school's curricula. Teacher's instructional practices reflect inconsistent checks for understanding and feedback to students.

Impact

Teachers and students have limited feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, teacher teams administered baseline assessments aligned to Common Core Learning Standards in English and math and then analyzed student performance. Teacher teams worked collaboratively with school leaders and the data coach to tier students' performance in meeting grade level standards. Students in the lowest tier were targeted strategically with teacher teams analyzing student work products during the course of each unit of study, conducting ongoing checks for understanding and frequent formative assessments, and adjusting curricula. Adjustments included modification of lesson plans to increase time on tasks through spiraling in content via do now activities, specialized homework assignments, or additional small group instruction). However, the use of the data from common assessments is yet to be fully implemented to inform delivery of instruction across classrooms.
- Three of the seven students, who shared their folders, had work that had actionable feedback. In one student's writing assignment, the teacher offered effective feedback advising the student to add more vocabulary and sensory details and made comments regarding mechanics of writing as well. Student work displayed in a math classroom had rubrics attached with next learning steps. However, student work displayed in hallways and classrooms did not consistently include rubrics with targeted feedback from teachers or next steps for students to use to meet their instructional goals. Most student work was graded using a check or a number grade system with limited next steps to improve learning noted. For example, essay rubrics were simply circled with no next learning steps articulated. Additionally, a second grade student presented his work, with illegible feedback that both the student and the reviewer could not understand.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of checks for understanding and adjustments were inconsistent. For example, in two ELA classes, while students worked in groups, teachers individually spoke with each student to ensure they were able to identify and cite evidence. However, in other classes, teachers asked questions to the whole class or called on student volunteers to determine if all students understood and after receiving a few answers moved on with the lesson. The practice of annotating students' strengths and areas for improvement was not observed consistently across classes, thus reducing on-the-spot adjustments to the lesson to move students towards their instructional goals.

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 that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

As a result of on-going teacher collaboration, teachers have been able to share best pedagogical practices around instructional next steps, improving their practice and increasing progress made toward goals for students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal embedded common planning periods into teachers' weekly schedules. These sessions are organized by grades in the elementary level and by subjects in the middle school level. In these meeting, teachers hold each other accountable for meeting the team's week-to-week objectives. Teachers shared that their weekly engagement has helped them to evolve in their teaching practice and to have a better understanding of their students' academic needs as well as increasing students' access to the curriculum and the ability to demonstrate progress towards academic goals.
- During a third grade team meeting observed, teachers triangulated data by reviewing and analyzing the results of the third grade science unit assessments with student work products, formative assessments, and student reflections. The data revealed that the main area of concern was English language learners' understanding and use of new vocabulary. Henceforward, teachers focused on different teaching strategies to teach new vocabulary to English language learners as well as the implementation of language acquisition techniques to move students from pre-production to early production. For example, teachers planned to use visuals, prior knowledge, repetition and opportunities for students to use new words in reading, writing, and discussion. In addition, teachers designed groupings based on data and students ability to function in different group settings.
- Teacher teams have adopted the final word protocol for looking at student work. This protocol entails the citing of specific data and noticings, a description of the sample student work and the academic task, and a process for discussing ideas towards moving student learning to next level, as well as for making suggestions regarding the resources needed for implementation.
- Teachers across grades, in their weekly meetings, design an articulation plan to set expectations for students based on their progress towards their academic targets according to their grade level. For example, the school is looking at academic vocabulary and strategies to access complex texts and how they develop in complexity as students move from grade to grade.