



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Roland Patterson

Middle School X229

**275 Harlem River Park Bridge
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Dr. Ezra B. Matthias

**Date of review: April 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo**

The School Context

Roland Patterson is a middle school with 254 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 45% Black, and 55% Hispanic students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 36% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. 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 | 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 | Additional Findings | 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 | Celebration | Proficient |

Area of Celebration

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

Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers engage in structured professional collaborations on teams and consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

A focus on assessment analysis has built capacity and has resulted in sustained reflection and improvement of instructional practices school-wide to advance student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- During the English language arts team meeting observed, teachers focused their inquiry around the question “How can we further support English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities through close reading?” based on analysis of multiple forms of data including New York State English as a Second Language Test (NYSESLAT), classroom observations, and benchmark mid-year writing. This data analysis indicated that a large portion of these two subgroups struggled with close reading across disciplines and with a variety of texts. Teachers examined student work presented, offered feedback, and collaboratively decided on research-based practices to implement to accelerate the learning of students in their respective subgroups. For example, some of the practices discussed included: annotating, chunking texts, using images to preview vocabulary, and use of close reading anchor charts. For example, in a grade 6 English language arts (ELA) class for Ells, the teacher developed thinking maps to engage all students, as data indicated that students needed to build their speaking and listening skills. Learning styles used included visual, auditory, presentation, kinesthetic, and interpersonal. Consequently, Ell students now participate in discussions using accountable talk to express ideas and build upon the practice of other classmates, cite relevant evidence to support claims when discussing a text, and are beginning to produce more meaningful written work.
- Teachers including respective special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers collaborate in vertical content area teams to adjust units of study, analyze their lessons, and improve lesson alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards utilizing questions based on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge. Data results generated from mid-term student assessments have provided relevant information to teacher teams on strategies that have yielded positive results for students.
- Teachers shared that they make decisions about curriculum and unit plan changes based on data reviews and that the decisions are supported by the administration. For example, through collaborative inquiry the vertical team created school-wide writing strategies such as: Point-Evidence-Explain-Link (PEEL) and the Restate Overview of topic-Why is it important (ROW) strategy as observed in writing pieces shared during the student work meeting and in student friendly rubrics that are used school-wide. As a result of the team’s work there is a school-wide improvement in writing based on New York City Schoolnet Spring benchmark results.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Instructional practices do not regularly incorporate effective questioning, use of multiple entry points, and discussion strategies.

Impact

Across grades students do not productively struggle with tasks, as multiple entry points are inconsistently implemented, limiting student engagement resulting in uneven levels of participation across classrooms and lost opportunities for students to demonstrate high order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers are beginning to ask open-ended questions and students in some classrooms are responding to comments from their peers. For example in a grade 8 math class, the teacher asked questions such as, “How can we determine the solution to a system of linear equations?” and “What does it mean to have a solution?” Students explained their responses and one ELL student requested further explanations since her answer differed from her peers. However, these practices are not the norm as in many classrooms teachers continue to ask low-level questions, and discussions are primarily between the teacher and individual students. In a multi-grade reading skills classroom, the essential question “Are there benefits to use the strategy Point, Evidence, Explain and Link ideas?” was listed in the lesson plan, while in another grade 7 ELA class, students were presented with the question “Can a text have more than one theme?”
- To meet students’ needs, some teachers, use scaffolding techniques such as graphic organizers and visual resources to support writing and math. For example, during a grade 7 English language arts class, the teacher reviewed specific strategies, modeled for the students, and gave students graphic organizers, color-coded response cards, and sentence starters to support the writing, speaking, and listening skills of ELLs. These practices, however, are not consistent across classrooms. For example, in a multi-grade special education reading skills classroom, students struggled to start their body paragraphs without any scaffolding support.
- Student work folders and portfolios do not consistently demonstrate work that exemplifies critical thinking tasks. For example a review of a grade 8 writing piece showed that students were asked to analyze four documents and based on the evidence make an argument based on the question, “Is government assistance necessary? Although students were asked to cite evidence in class, the written work did not provide evidence of students’ synthesis of information, citation of claims, or defense of their arguments.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

The English language arts and math curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and staff members are beginning to align the social studies and science curricula to content standards. While some curricula planning is designed to give a diversity of learners access, academic tasks and planning across content areas is not consistently rigorous.

Impact

Students do not consistently have access to coherently sequenced curricula units of study and challenging tasks that cognitively engage and prepare them for college and careers.

As such, all students are not suitably challenged and do not transfer their learning to new contexts.

Supporting Evidence

- Although English language arts and math unit plans demonstrate alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, other subject areas do not. For example in one math lesson students struggled productively to determine the solution to a system of linear equations both graphically and algebraically, while in another math classroom, students determined the slope of a line from a graph, a table, and equation or two points on the line with the help of the teacher or their peers. This rigor, however, is not the norm, as evidenced by a review of unit and lesson plans in science and social studies.
- School leaders stated that they shared the New York City science and social studies scope and sequence with staff. However, across grades, assigned tasks in both content areas do not demonstrate rigorous expectations and alignment with State standards. For example in one social studies class the task required students to analyze documents based on elements of World War II (WWII) using sentence starters for lower-level questions such as, “One thing I noticed is...This tells me that WWII had something to do with...”, and “Two things I noticed were...This tells me that WWII had something to do with...”
- Unit plans in some content areas contain various scaffolds and entry points reflecting intentional planning to provide access to a diversity of students. For example, science lesson plans show the use of visual aids, assorted graphic organizers, and leveled texts.

Findings

Teachers provide common performance based end-of-unit assessments to assess progress towards goals, regularly check for student understanding, and use student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers use assessments results to make adjustments that meet their students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers review end-of-unit assessments and student work samples to make informed decisions in adjusting instruction. Additionally, they modify lessons, to ascertain specific content for re-teaching, and to differentiate instructional strategies for individual and group of students. For example, during the English language arts team meeting, teachers analyzed mid-term benchmark data in writing and they noticed that ELL and Individual Education Plan (IEP) students struggled with close reading, across disciplines and with a variety of texts. Teachers decided on to use a variety of research-based practices to address gaps in students' academic performance through continued interdisciplinary scaffolding and cross-curricular content engagement in academic tasks that require use of different modalities.
- Teachers' checklists, notes, exit tickets, graphic organizers and rubrics for student work serve as ongoing checks for understanding with all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities who receive specific feedback,
- Students conduct self and peer assessments, perform reflections based upon teacher feedback, and track their own individual progress by means of rubric scores as evidenced by student writing shared during the student meeting. During a grade 6 English language arts lesson, students were observed completing an exit ticket, reflection and/or optional challenge question responding to a prompt.
- Students explained that they are able to choose strategies and reflection sheets to self-assess. Students shared their writing reflections during the student meeting referencing how their chosen strategies helped them create more effective essays. Students explained that it was "easier to get good grades" because they "know exactly how to apply the rules for writing and meet expectations".

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School administrators have developed structures to communicate and monitor implementation of expectations and provide training to staff to support set expectations. Teachers provide oral and written feedback on student progress towards school expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers conform to a culture of learning aligned to verbal and written expectations set by school leaders. Families understand students' progress toward the next level of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shares his expectations with staff during faculty and professional development meetings. School leaders expressed the expectation that teachers understand each student's entry point in order to support students' continued growth, as evidenced by a review of the professional development plan, agendas from professional learning sessions, and observation of teacher practice.
- Professional needs-based inter-visitations, classroom observations, and timely feedback from classroom visits that is discussed at teacher team meetings to norm practices, create a strong accountability structure for meeting expectations.
- Parents shared that teachers offer guidance and support and regularly send updates on their child's progress via phone and email outreach. Progress reports distributed twice annually, report cards, and parent workshops enable staff and parents to exchange ideas and discuss goals aligned to the school's expectations for student success. Parents stated that the school offers workshops on the Common Core Learning Standards to help them better understand the expectations of those standards. Additionally, other communication systems such as the Engrade online grading program used effectively school-wide to monitor student progress and track student data has increased communication between the school and parents.