



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Museum School

Elementary School X333

**888 Rev. James Polite Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Gabriela Hernandez

**Date of review: May 11, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Karen Ames**

The School Context

The Museum School is an elementary school with 432 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 24% Black, 74% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 27% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. 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	Focus	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	Celebration	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	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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

Learners were actively engaged and there were multiple opportunities to promote high order thinking and high level participation and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, lessons were aligned to the school's instructional focus, improving questioning and increasing student engagement, and reflected an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for teachers. During the visit, it was noted that classroom lessons included a wide range of questioning strategies from the Depth of Knowledge wheel to promote active student engagement. This was most evident across the English language arts classes where students were required to respond to the different levels of questioning from multiple literature resources.
- Students across classrooms produce work and engage in discussions that reflect critical thinking and problem solving. Checklists and self-assessment forms used by students prior to submitting their work demonstrate student accountability for their own learning. In a grade 3 math class, students completed a type of angles checklist before engaging in a full lesson on angles. The self-assessment checklist included four lines: I can name the different types of angles; I can label...; I can draw... And I can describe different types of angles using geometric terms. In a grade 5 math class, students worked in partnerships using their class notes to review the definitions of improper fractions and mixed numbers using their own words.
- In many classrooms, students were provided with opportunities to engage in peer-to-peer discussions. Teachers provided graphic organizers and assigned roles to students to encourage active participation and high level discussions. In a grade 5 math class, students were provided a real life example to discuss measurement data, the fifth grade survey students completed for their Senior Trip. Students were asked to turn and talk to discuss this question, "When and where do you think you will come across data tables and line plots in your life?" In a grade 4 English language arts class, students were grouped in trios using "Think, Pair, Share" to discuss, "What do you notice about the countries we've chosen? How did you and your partner make your decision? What are some ways that the other partners decided?"

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Developing

Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrating the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills inconsistently across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school is in the process of developing curricula to facilitate student ownership of learning and to promote college and career readiness for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is on its second year of implementing Expeditionary Learning Curriculum for grades 3 through 5. Teachers College Reading and Writing curriculum is used for grades K-2. The curriculum team reviews curriculum and adjust lesson topics, resources and pacing to ensure Common Core alignment. They map out units and calendar them on their individual grades. Pre- and post- assessments are developed and administered to assess progress of student learning. For example, the team has incorporated projects and tasks connected to social studies and science aligned to the citywide scope and sequence and which integrate topics from Expeditionary Learning and TC allowing students to gain greater access to the information. However, the practice of informing curricular decisions for all learners through the in-depth analysis of data and student work is not yet a systematic practice.
- Although curriculum documents are structured to reflect Common Core Learning Standards, academic tasks do not always facilitate students' ownership of their learning. Units of studies have a strong reading component that is supported by implementing a 90 minute daily reading workshop to include mini lesson opportunities for active engagement as well as independent and group work and a 20-minute read aloud session. In reviewing reading units there were not specific instructional tasks to assess the objectives of each lesson in the units. For example, in a grade 3 English language arts unit, the essential question asked was, "How do authors capture a reader's imagination?" The unit provided a set of content objectives aligned to the standards with a list of skills to master such as: describe the characters in the story; answer text-based questions; determine meaning of unfamiliar words; use literary terms to describe parts of a story and determine main idea and supporting details. There were few opportunities for students to analyze, synthesize and engage in meaningful discussion.
- Across grades and subjects curricular documents to support English language learners and students with disabilities was inconsistent, therefore, these students have limited access to common core-aligned tasks. For example, for grade 5 lessons on adding and subtracting fractions there are differentiated problems by level of difficulty that address the standards while kindergarten lesson plans listed the word interventions with no further details of support for struggling students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The school is in the process of developing rubrics and grading policies to align with the school's curricula. The use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals is at its initial stages.

Impact

Rubrics and grading policies are not yet fully aligned with the school's curricula providing limited targeted feedback to students. Results of common assessments are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a variety of checklists and rubrics in their classrooms; however, they are not consistent across grades and subjects. Teachers are at the initial stages of looking at student work across grades measured against a standards-based rubric as a way to norm scoring criteria and employ a tool to measure progress. Across classrooms visited, the use of rubrics was loosely aligned to curricula and most rubrics were generic and not task-specific.
- Although teachers provide suggestions for student improvement, feedback inconsistently delivers next steps based on specific, leveled rubric criteria in order to indicate how students can move to the next level. An example of teacher feedback was documented as "nice answer", "great job" and "good work". Feedback was more a praise than an action to move students to the next level.
- Teachers have begun to set up systems to look at student work to inform adjustments to instruction. For example, after analyzing a piece of informational writing, grade 4 English teachers discussed ways to modify instruction which included unpacking the task to make the requirements of the task clear, spending more time on the use of link words and citing evidence connected to the main idea. A peer editing guide with roles and responsibilities for the responder and the writer was developed during this process. Teachers have also devised a sheet to capture and monitor student progress. However, a formal, systematic way to track student progress and the impact of teacher work is still evolving.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and staff are developing expectations for students that are connected to college and career readiness and developing systems to provide feedback to families regarding student progress towards meeting those expectations.

Impact

A culture for learning that communicates high expectations for staff and students is developing. Systems to provide feedback and guidance supports are emerging to help prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Communication to parents includes letters, calendars and phone calls. Parents are invited to monthly workshops to help their children become college and career ready. Some of the workshops offered are: *Book and Breakfast - Session I and II* where parents participate in book demonstrations, discussions and literacy games; *College Preparation for Immigrant Students*, *Friendly Strategies to Navigate Student School Success* and *Common Core Standards*. Although the school has developed some systems to communicate to parents and families, parents expressed during the parents' meeting that they do not feel supported by the school. They also expressed that the principal was not visible in the school and many of the meetings dates were changed at the last minute without notification. In addition, School Leadership Team parents present at the meeting expressed that they were not aware of the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) procedures.
- Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students. The school currently communicates with the entire school community in several ways. On a weekly basis, teachers are provided with a Weekly Bulletin that details the school's upcoming events, deadlines, book of the month and special news. Teachers receive both a printed and electronic copy of the Weekly Bulletin.
- On Tuesdays, teachers host individual parent meetings to inform progress of their children in addition to the progress reports sent home. In addition to the Weekly Bulletin, parents also receive monthly grade newsletters providing them with curriculum information and what is going in their classrooms.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Teachers are engaged in professional collaborations and teacher teams are in the process of creating structures to organize around specific team goals that are aligned to school-wide goals or goals for identified groups of students.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations are beginning to result in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students leading to improved student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in a variety of collaborative teams including the professional development committee focused on creating learning opportunities for all staff based on identified areas of needs. Grade level teams focus on curriculum development and examining student work and professional learning communities working in collaboration with consultants from Generation Ready identifying areas to support teachers in preparation and planning. While teams meet regularly, structures to organize around specific team goals that are aligned to the school-wide goal with measures of team accountability for enhanced teacher practice and improved student achievement are still evolving.
- The use of an inquiry approach is evident in some team structures, but not in others. For example, the Generation Ready Professional Learning Communities are structured through the use of a protocol to surface best practices among a group of teachers so that others could then implement those strategies in their classrooms and report on them. However, the systematic practice among members of a team to analyze both teacher and student work for students on whom they are focused with a view towards improving teacher practice and making progress towards goals for those students is not yet consistent in the collaborative nature of the teams.
- Teacher teams look at assessment data and discuss next steps. For example, during a teacher team observed, a grade four literacy inquiry team reviewed mid-unit writing pieces and documented noticings across classes and grades. The team began to fill out the writing group goals sheets to ensure alignment to Common Core English language arts-literacy writing standards and shared ideas to strengthen students' writing skills. Graphic organizers and checklists were shared during the meeting. While teams look at student work and consider instructional modifications, they are not yet specifically designed to examine progress of students towards specifically defined student goals with systematic tracking of student progress as well as the team's efforts towards its own success in moving students to the next level and enhancing teacher practice.