



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 340

Elementary School X340

**25 West 195th Street
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Alexei Nichols

**Date of review: February 3rd, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell**

The School Context

P.S. 340 is an elementary school with 650 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 9% Black, 83% Hispanic, 2% White, 4% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 1% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

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	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide ongoing professional development. School leaders and staff effectively communicate high expectations to families and partner with them to support student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

The school's accountability and support structures to achieve high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability for student progress and improved teacher practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders model high expectations for staff members through cycles of frequent observations, and collaborative learning walks followed by timely feedback. During a recent learning walk, which included teachers, the staff received glow and grow feedback as well as a connection piece to upcoming professional development to support areas for growth. A collaborative professional development committee adapts and revises professional development opportunities in response to observations, learning walks, and student data as well as identifies key staff members to lead professional development sessions.
- School leaders expressed a belief in reciprocal accountability with staff and the need to provide structures and supports for their expectations. The principal creates a daily message to the staff to highlight initiatives, areas of focus, and next steps. The school promotes the sharing of best practices and shares resources using Google docs. Teachers and teacher teams post inquiry team meeting information, curriculum adjustments, and lesson plans online.
- Families consistently receive updates on their children's progress through Tuesday family conferences, progress reports, and family workshops. Parents, who are also members of the school leadership team, stated that the school has improved structures based on parent feedback. Parents noted that the teachers talk to them "all the time," and provide them with updates on their children's goals and progress through meetings, phone calls, texts, and emails. Parents also appreciate workshops the school provides regarding the Common Core Learning Standards, the curricula, and classroom practices that teachers are implementing. For example, the school recently conducted multiple grade level workshops for parents on reading strategies connected to the classroom and Common Core Learning Standards.
- Through the Parent Teacher Association and School Leadership Team, families collaborate with school leaders in creating a shared vision for the school and provide input on academic and enrichment programs. With parent support, the school has been able to expand programs for students including ballroom dancing, swimming, and a new computer lab. Parents work with the school to provide community building activities and improve family turn-out at school events. Additionally, parents provide regular feedback on school culture and safety as well as participate in the review of school goals.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics aligned with the school's curricula, and consistently use checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Although teachers provide actionable feedback on student work and have created school-wide rubrics, assessments do not yet present a clear portrait of student mastery and feedback is not always meaningful to students and teachers regarding next steps. In addition, adjustments made to teacher plans and during instruction do not always lead to student awareness regarding their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers used strategic questioning, cold calling, and exit slips to check for student understanding. For instance, during a grade two lesson on urban communities, the teacher planned tiered 'check for understanding' questions and cold called students from color-coded wooden sticks with student's names written on them. In contrast, in a grade 5 English language arts lesson, whereas the teacher did ask 'check for understanding' questions during a whole group instruction, there was a missed opportunity to check for understanding after a partner activity before regrouping. Therefore, although checks for understanding occurred across classroom there were some missed opportunities to identify students in need of extra supports when transitioning students to new tasks
- Across classrooms, a review of posted student work and student portfolios showed that teachers gave students actionable feedback aligned to rubrics with next steps such as "try to incorporate more robust vocabulary," or "try to focus on describing the setting." Students stated that they did use the rubric during the writing process to check their work, but whereas, many students were aware of some feedback they had been given, few students could explain how they were going to improve. Student work portfolios do not include structures for students to understand the improvement of rubric-aligned skills over time.
- Teacher teams have created curricula aligned pre- and post- unit diagnostic assessments to inform instructional adjustments. Teachers use student work to create flexible grouping, identify scaffolds for support, and identify key standards and skills that students need reinforced during the unit.
- The school has implemented a rubric for self-adjustment and students follow a protocol at the end of the unit to analyze their own progress. In a grade one English language arts classroom, a rubric was posted for students to reference during the writing process. In a grade five math classroom, students also were able to reference a math short response rubric to self-assess their work. However, this practice has not yet created awareness among all students for their next learning steps as evidenced by discussion with students during classroom visits and in student group.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure the curricula align to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula units and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Strategic curricula decisions result in coherence across grades and subjects that promote college and career readiness for all students. Scaffolds and multiple entry points are included in planning so that students have access to curricula and tasks that cognitively engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teacher teams conducted a gap analysis between published and school created curricula. They then blended school-created units with purchased resources in Ready Gen to better reflect the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards. A review of unit documents in English language arts revealed close reading strategies, balance of non-fiction and fiction texts, higher-order thinking skills, academic vocabulary support, and scaffolds for student subgroups included across grades. The school also incorporated a tiered vocabulary support they created called Robust Vocabulary. Important vocabulary words with unit texts are identified at each grade level and the school creates structured scaffolds for each unit surrounding those vocabulary words.
- The school's math curriculum has combined school created units with Go Math and EngageNY materials to create a clear progression of standards, including practice in fluency, and providing rigorous problem solving within real world scenarios. In observed math classrooms, teachers connected mathematical practice to real world application, provided students with practice of fundamental skills, and engaged students in rigorous problem solving with manipulative supports.
- Teacher teams use protocols to analyze student performance and gaps in understanding from pre-unit assessments to develop units with multiple entry points and challenging tasks for all learners. Following a team's revisions, school leaders furnish teams with feedback on the revised units. A review of teacher team logs and units showed that teachers identified groups of students, including identifying English language learners and students with disabilities, based on assessment data and student work and, subsequently, developed strategies, supports, and scaffolds that were included in the unit revisions. For example, a kindergarten unit that required all students to understand and explain sequential order of a how-to task was modified to first make the task more meaningful to the students as well as to provide scaffolds to assist students in organizing their own thinking.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school's beliefs on how students learn best informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Across classrooms teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices, instructional scaffolds, and multiple entry points engage students in appropriately challenging tasks so that all students demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers modified texts, scaffolded questions, provided students the opportunity to have discussions with peers, and created differentiated graphic organizers to support students in producing high quality work products. For example, during a read aloud on urban communities in a grade two bilingual classroom, the teacher used visual and written supports for key vocabulary terms, and provided students multiple opportunities to turn and talk with a partner after asking higher order questions. The teacher connected the lesson to the essential question of the unit and designed a content objective and a language objective for students. Students were divided into strategic groups to practice the lesson objectives. Each group received different texts and teacher-created supports based on student proficiency.
- Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect the school's articulated belief in targeted, small group discussion, student-to-student discussion opportunities, deepening student academic vocabulary, and differentiated supports. For instance, in a grade five English language arts lesson, the teacher modeled a close reading strategy on the topic of overcoming obstacles and using the best textual evidence to support a claim. Students were given an opportunity to turn and talk as well as a music walk during which students walked around the room until the music stopped and shared with the student closest to them their claim and the text evidence they were using to support their claim. Students then entered into group discussions, with modified supports, in which they had to answer text-based higher-order questions and cite their evidence.
- Across classrooms, student work and culminating tasks in English language arts and mathematics required students to demonstrate higher order thinking. For instance, in a first grade Integrated Co-Teaching classroom students were using texts to write about community helpers. Students worked on extended writing pieces in which they use important information they identified within the texts. Then, they presented their information to the class and their classmates gave feedback to the author using rubric language such as "she added a detail from the text." A review of posted work across grades showed students solving rigorous problems, engaging in extended writing opportunities, and using text evidence to support their claims.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work. Embedded distributed leadership structures are focused on improved student learning.

Impact

Teacher collaboration results in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for students. Effective teacher leadership and an integral role in key decisions affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers were observed conducting a structured inquiry meeting in which they reviewed student assessment data, identified strategies for support, and connected an assessment to measure their own effectiveness. A grade five teacher team analyzed a recent mathematics assessment with student work, and identified standards on fractions and geometry with which students struggled. They identified teaching strategies aligned to these standards and created a plan to implement the strategies and reassess after ten sessions.
- Teacher teams meet during common planning time several times per week to look at student work, adjust curricula, and share best practices aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers stated that school leaders value their team’s decisions with regard to curriculum revisions. Curriculum revisions supported by teachers include guided reading, academic vocabulary expansion, and combining Go Math and Engage NY resources.
- School leadership structures are in place, such as grade team meetings, staff surveys, and small group pilots, to engage teachers in school wide decisions. For example, based on teacher feedback and analysis of curricula materials the school provides professional development and structure time for teams to meet and design extensions and supports for academic vocabulary and performance-based assessments added to curricula. Teacher experts are identified to lead most professional development sessions.
- Teachers engage with school leaders in collaborative monthly learning walks that identify ‘glows and grows’ for the school connected to the Quality Review rubric, Danielson Framework for Teaching, and Common Core Learning Standards. The professional development committee collaborates with school leaders to revise professional development offerings. Teachers conduct structured intervisitation with colleagues based on inquiry team research and based on feedback from school leaders. Teachers capture low inference observations, analyze student outcomes, and reflect on their own practice.