



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 396

Elementary School X396

**1930 Andrews Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Nicole Tine

**Date of review: March 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit**

The School Context

P.S. 396 is an elementary school with 373 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 23% Black, 75% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 25% 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 92.2%.

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	Proficient
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	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	Well Developed
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

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and students and promote a culture for learning that provides supports for all to understand and meet those expectations. Communication between the school and homes revolves around the expectations for students and families.

Impact

The support provided to staff, families, and students, entails training for teachers which promotes a culture of mutual accountability, workshops for and meetings with parents, which allow them to be true partners in their children's academic achievement, and a unified set of expectations for students to ensure they are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration shares the school's expectations with the staff in different ways, including a weekly newsletter, a staff handbook, professional development sessions in and outside of the school, and the regular presence of administrators in classrooms. Last year, the principal and assistant principal conducted over 300 observations and provided feedback to the staff. Consultants also work with teachers and all new teachers have a mentor. Teachers are held accountable for their work and supporting their colleagues via their work with the portfolio committee which helps new teachers prepare their portfolio for tenure and with their teachers' professional contribution logs which document their professional involvement at the school and with colleagues, and promotes a culture of learning for all.
- During the student interview, students spoke about the importance of having and using the personalized tools they receive in class. They mentioned that these resources help them to understand and finish their work. The tools include folders with templates and list of words they are learning, checklists for different writing genres, resources they can bring home such as books, and video resources, to allow them to review concepts. Students also spoke about school-wide recognition for the three "Rs" and the assemblies that bring everyone together to celebrate students and teachers.
- The school also provides parents with the tools and resources needed to be partners in their children's achievement. There is a parent handbook that delineates the expectations to parents. During the parent meeting, they mentioned that they feel supported and their efforts are acknowledged. For example there are parent awards. They receive report cards with narratives which explain their children's strengths and areas of improvement, and workshops that provide them with strategies on ways to help their children at home. They communicate with the school through calls, emails, letters, the Dojo Class tracker, during assemblies, and other school events. Classrooms offer class specific workshops to parents, and on Tuesdays parents are able to meet with teachers reinforcing the home/school relationship.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points to the curricula and tasks.

Impact

Teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the school's foci and engage learners in appropriately challenging tasks and in demonstrating higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to curricula and reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. The administrators and teachers all talked about the school's focus on parallel teaching, small group instruction, differentiating resources, and pair and buddy work as practices that support student learning. Across classrooms, these practices were observed. For example, in a kindergarten class, students were divided into two groups with each group working with a teacher. Each teacher had tools and materials to engage their group in a hands-on activity around identifying which type of paper would be best for writing/drawing.
- Across classrooms teaching strategies provided multiple entry points into the curricula for learners. In a second grade NEST classroom, students were using personalized bracelets with the prompt "notice new fancy pants words and try to solve them", charts with sentence starters, or lists of strategies to use depending on their needs with vocabulary or comprehension. The collaborative and inclusive culture of classrooms also facilitated learning for the different learners in the class. In one classroom, one student who preferred working alone and with a divider was allowed to do so. In another, students were grouped based on their academic and social needs and strengths. Across classrooms, these multiple entry points allowed students to engage in appropriately challenging work. For example, in a third grade class, students were using sentence strips to determine which ones supported and which ones did not support their reading of the *Crazy Critters*.
- Students were consistently engaged and participated in discussions across the classrooms. However, some of these discussions were facilitated by the teachers. In one class, the teacher asked a student to read her work, then decided to read it herself. In another, the teacher was asking students to give answers to questions that were already circled on the board. Therefore, planning by teachers did not evidence sufficient activities that will provide higher-order thinking questions and prompts to help increase students' levels of thinking and ownership of the work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula and tasks are aligned to the Common Core, the instructional shifts, and the content standards. Academic tasks are planned using student work and data.

Impact

The level of rigor in the curricula helps promote college and career readiness for all students as well as allows all students to have access to the curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- The curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core and content standards. The school decided to use and support teachers with the Teachers' College (TC) Reading and Writing Project's resources. In addition to attending TC workshops, teachers are also engaged in the Japanese lesson study to develop their pedagogy. The curriculum committee meets once a month to refine curricula, discuss instructional steps, and look at data to inform adjustments.
- To promote coherence across the grades and subject areas, the school focuses on building stamina with reading marathons, increase the volume of work submitted by ensuring that writing happens across all grades, and with questioning. The school also has a one book/one school initiative that allows everyone in the school to read the same book. This has helped boost the self-esteem of struggling readers such as some English language learners who are able to read these books to lower grade students.
- Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data. Students mentioned having a choice in writing topics and materials used to support them in class. Because of student data, the unit on author's study has replaced the one on poetry. For the unit on folktales, teachers ensured that they found texts that taught the concepts originally planned for but at differing reading levels to ensure all students have access to these texts.

Findings

The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of and track student progress towards goals and adjust curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of on-going checks for understanding, student self- and peer-assessment.

Impact

Teachers are able to adjust curricula appropriately to meet students' learning needs and ensure all students demonstrate increased mastery and are aware of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress. Teachers use running records, and pre/post and interim assessments to identify trends within a class and intra- and inter-grades. The data is also used to make curricular decisions. A third grade teacher's tracker allowed her to analyze student data as well as identify next steps for each student, informing grouping, and resources needed. Teachers also use the Class Dojo app to track student behavior and share the data with families.
- Student self- and peer-assessment practices were evident during class visits throughout the grades. Students self- and peer assessed using checklists and rubrics and were asked to justify their evaluations. In one classroom, students were working in pairs to assess each other with the reading of long vowels. In another, they were asked to identify the partner work behavior they were going to focus on and monitor during the independent activity. At the end of the class, the teacher asked them to share some moves they made that were good partner behaviors and they listed among others, using respectful language, annotating, and being grounded in the text. One student interjected "[my partner] said something really smart [that gave us a clue about the reading]."
- Students are being prepared for their next steps whether within the school or beyond. Teachers have organized a video self-monitoring program for some students to allow them to see themselves (after editing) making transitions without or with little prompting from one activity to the next. In these self-monitoring videos, students are constantly prompted to do the next thing but once these prompts and directions are edited, it gives them a feeling of accomplishment and a model to emulate. These self-monitoring videos are created to help students prepare for life in middle school when they will most likely not receive the same supports they receive in elementary school.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Teachers analyze key elements of student and classroom practice and play an integral role in the embedded distributive leadership structures established at the school.

Impact

There is coherence in the work that is done across grades and subject areas. There are improvements in student outcomes and teacher practice, and teachers have a say in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers participate in and/or lead grade level meetings, inquiry work, and set up lab sites for collaborations that help to strengthen teacher pedagogy. Staff are grade leaders, mentors, and facilitate professional development for their colleagues. The teachers who are part of the curriculum committee make decisions around curricula, assessments, feedback to teachers around curricular decisions, and vertical alignment for the entire school. All professional development offered in last year's summer academy were facilitated by teachers and it is expected to be the same for summer 2015. School data show an increase in teacher effectiveness in all four domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- Teachers produce many of the resources used at the school as well as facilitate many of the programs offered to both teachers and students. For example, teachers develop trackers that allow them to capture data for common assessments, analyze the data, and identify next instructional steps based on the data. They lead teacher teams as well as afterschool programs such as gardening and theater. They set their goals and have a say in the supports they receive.
- During the teacher team observed, teachers were filling out the "Major Works Analysis" tracker in math. They identified some gaps in the students' work and suggested possible next steps to one another. For example, rewording the questions, teaching to skip count or bundle because students were grouping with dots instead were two suggestions given. One teacher explained that because students have issues remaining focused for sustained amounts of time, they needed to look at ways to simplify the methods they were using to arrive at their answers. The school has seen increases in its English language arts and math scores for students scoring at levels 3 and 4 as well as an increase in students' science scores.