



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 723

Elementary- Middle- High School X723

**3540 Bivona Street
Bronx, NY 10475**

Principal: Christine Walsh

**Date of review: May 4 -5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant, Ed.D.**

The School Context

P.S. 723 is an elementary, middle and high school with 513 students from grade kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 43% Black, 51% Hispanic, 4% White, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 75% of the students enrolled and girls account for 25%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 85.6%.

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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teachers systematically collaborate to examine student work, plan together and share ideas and best practices. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practice.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The School-wide Inquiry Team to Increase Student Engagement is the main focus team of the school and helps drive support of the school's instructional focus of "student engagement and its importance to student outcomes". The team is made up of various teachers from the twelve sites of the school. Each participant is responsible for sharing information at his or her site and at the inquiry team. The team examined the Danielson rubric, articles about student engagement and developed a student survey on "*How I Learn Best*", which was given to students in September for teachers to get data about their students and refine their lesson. They also are examining teacher lesson plans that engage students. The team's results have been shared at the faculty conference and a final presentation will be given in June.
- With additional opportunities being provided for common planning time, pedagogues are analyzing teacher's lessons to see if they are aligned to the school's instructional focus on student engagement. Teams are utilizing various resources including, *Understanding by Design* templates for curriculum mapping, *Danielson's Framework for Teaching* and Enhancing Education's "*The 5E's*". Each teacher on the School-wide Inquiry Team to Increase Student Engagement has been charged to submit teacher's lessons from their particular site and the team analyzes to see if it meets the student engagement standards of "*The 5E's*". School-wide, teachers have become more discerning and reflective about their practice and its direct impact on their students' learning outcomes as evident in the agendas and minutes of meetings and adjusted teacher lesson plans. The entire school community is aware of what is being taught and its connection to the instructional focus.
- The alternate assessment coach was a classroom teacher of alternatively assessed students, who attended various professional development opportunities and used what was presented in her classroom. She helps with any student behavioral issues and helps teachers in the TEACCH methodology. In addition, every teacher team has a facilitator and recorders who facilitate the meetings and present what was discussed to administration. Finally, administration has assigned a unit coordinator in each of the twelve sites of the school. They handle the day-to-day operations of the schools and are mentors to the teachers. This shared leadership has led to the staff establishing a school-wide structure of identifying, targeting and assessing students to increase learning outcomes to be used consistently throughout the school.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While pedagogy provides consistent instructional supports, including questioning and discussion techniques, the use of strategic entry points and extensions varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extensions support alternative assessment students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff members participated in professional development on Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* and Bloom's *Taxonomy* during the first faculty conference in September. Staff has also received professional development on accountable talk in the classroom. This has been supplemented by the principal sending teachers to sessions on higher level thinking and questioning sponsored by the District for them to glean information and then turn-key to the rest of the staff. It is the principal's expectation for teachers to scaffold questions to include the lower-level students and then use higher-level questions using Webb's scale. However, this practice varied in classrooms throughout the school. For example, in a middle school visual arts class where the students were learning about printmaking, all of the students were reading the same passage, which was teacher-directed, no higher level questions were asked and no art work was actually being done. Therefore, there is limited evidence that teachers are deepening the level of instruction to provide appropriate challenge, which limits opportunities for all students to engage in effective higher-order thinking and extend learning experiences.
- While students are well-behaved and engaged in some classrooms, assigned tasks do not sufficiently produce higher order work products across grades and subject areas. This was evident in a middle school math class where the students were learning about the Pythagorean Theorem. After the students created a life-sized triangle using masking tape and the squares on the floor, the teacher gave all students the same worksheet to solve math problems. Similarly, some student notebooks and work folders do not show sufficient evidence of tiered supports to ensure consistent progress for struggling learners. Consequently, teachers do not know what students have learned, or how well and if immediate intervention and clarification can benefit the progress of those students.
- Individual teachers and teacher teams plan differentiated lessons using student data to guide their targeted adjustments. However, in virtually all middle school classes observed, lessons did not consistently reflect differentiation of modalities or offer a wide range of learning opportunities, especially for higher functioning students. Therefore, students were not able to fully participate in lessons, thereby reducing engagement and the opportunities to produce meaningful work that demonstrates higher levels of thinking and ownership.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Common Core aligned curricula strategically integrate the instructional shifts and emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills in academic tasks embedded coherently across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Across grades and content areas, academic tasks enable students to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses GoMath as their elementary school's math resource for standardized assessed students. Teachers look at the pre- and post- assessment data before and after each chapter to measure student growth. During each chapter, there are also mid-chapter checkpoints and quick checks that allow teachers to gauge how well students are doing. This information is then discussed at team meetings, leading to revisions and refinement of unit objectives and tasks. Math instructional shifts are integrated into the GoMath framework to build coherence within and across the grades. The teachers have identified the instructional shift toward rigor to strengthen their instructional practice and improve student outcomes. They examined rigor through analysis, comparison and discussion of student work, curriculum and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). This strategic work has led to improved coherence in the areas of fluency, application and deeper understanding of concepts. Also, the New York State Career Development and Occupational Standards (CDOS) are incorporated to promote college and career readiness for all learners.
- It is the school's mission and vision that college and career readiness skills are incorporated in teacher's lessons from kindergarten. Teachers emphasize skills needed for the future. For example, the TEACCH method or structured learning, primarily used to assist autistic students, helps students to learn how to follow a schedule and then work independently. Alternate assessment teachers met regularly throughout this school year to look at the CCLS and adapted the learning standards to allow multiple entry points for their students. The end result is a school-wide curriculum guide for students to explore their interest while adhering to the CCLS. Students on the autistic spectrum learn best with repetition, structure, visuals, shorter time and routines. Students with autism spectrum disorder have difficulty with receptive and expressive language, sequential memory, and handling changes in their environment. The construct of TEACCH is based in empirical research and helps students on the spectrum understand their environment and helps them understand the world around them through five principles: 1) physical structure 2) schedules 3) work systems 4) routine and 5) visual structure. These five principles, which are emphasized in lessons throughout the day provides for integration into real world application.
- Teacher feedback to administration indicated the benefits of project-based learning. Teachers found students were more engaged in learning when there was a culminating activity and a focus on particular theme. The curriculum map the school was using provided a monthly focus for teachers and was updated to include the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the instructional shifts. Administration involved the school-based coach and teacher teams to align the school curriculum to the CCLS. An alternate and standardized team met weekly to revise the curriculum map. The teacher teams worked on specific months and then presented it to the other sites. Based upon the instructional level of the students the teachers used appropriate Webb's DOK questions and multiple entry points to emphasize rigorous habits.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Administrators and teachers effectively use a wide range of assessment data to monitor school-level needs, student progress, and plan and adjust instruction and create intervention strategies when needed.

Impact

All students are provided consistently meaningful feedback regarding their progress and achievement and demonstrate increased mastery

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams regularly analyze baseline assessments for students they share in an effort to improve teacher practice and adjust curricula. The outcome of these conversations is shared with staff and parents. With student benchmarks results, the principal has one-to-one conversations with classroom teachers to see how their students progressed in comparison to previous scores. Each individual teacher creates their own chart analysis of their individual student's progress which is then organized into their data collection binders. Using this tracking system, teacher teams analyze student work to help inform their instruction and help students to master their goals. For example, at the teacher team meeting for students with autism, two teachers shared how they differentiate their lessons based on their students' WebABLLS scores, which drives their Individual Educational Plan (IEP) goals and, in turn, informs classroom instruction. The two teachers analyzed their students' data and saw that there was potential to create new groupings of students in English language arts. With administration approval, they created a differentiated period where a few students from class A are paired with a few students from class B for a homogenous group that has advanced student learning as evidenced by gains towards mastery of their IEP goals.
- Teachers consistently gather benchmark data including Ed Performance, Teacher's College Writing Continuum, unit assessments from the curriculum, ACHIEVE 3000, Brigance, SANDI, WebABLLS as well as student writing samples. In addition, teachers who are implementing the TEACCH methodology in their classrooms with children of autism assess the skills being taught based on the assessments of each individual student. The data collected charts growth of each student's long term & short-term IEP goals. Based on the data, teachers adjust their instruction accordingly for students to achieve these goals. Teachers maintain data binders and using various data systems to determine the strengths and areas of need of improvement as well as students' independence. Administration and teachers uses this information to focus on instructional strategies and determine which students require academic intervention services in addition to classroom instruction.
- One 8:1:1 teacher of students in a "pre-inclusion" style class for students on the autism spectrum noticed that based on last year's results of the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) that several of her students were placed in a third grade reading level. She knew that outside the context on SANDI, they would not be able to generalize and read at a third grade level based on the informal assessments that she was using. The teacher used the results of the assessment to inform her instruction, took on-going data collection and charted the growth of the student who is currently being mainstreamed in a grade 7 English language arts class. The teacher discussed with administration that the current assessment tool was not a true indicator of the student's progress, and all decided to change the tool. The teacher adjusted her planning as a result of the new information. She then used the Jennings Informal Reading Assessment as a baseline test during the 2013-2014 school year and used the item analysis for intervention for the 2014-2015 school year. Any particular student who scored at a second grade reading level on this assessment last year is now reading at a seventh grade reading level.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school maintains a supportive learning environment that conveys high expectations via various modes of communication. The school also works closely and shares relevant information with parents and students with a focus on future college readiness.

Impact

Structures that support the school’s high expectations build buy-in and accountability among staff, students and their families thus providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal constantly reinforces the guiding goals for the school which were introduced in September through the staff handbook. They are also reinforced at faculty conferences and via emails. The assistant principal emails articles, videos and podcasts to the entire staff regarding high expectations for students and for those students who are non-verbal. The “723X Charter” which lends itself towards personal responsibilities for all members of the school community is posted and read aloud by all each morning. The principal also reinforces the school’s mission and vision by making it part of the school’s letterhead. Principal holds teachers accountable for implementation of these goals through observations and the immediate feedback they receive afterwards as well as from the student assessment analysis. These ongoing communiqués manifest the school’s high standards.
- Family outreach by the students includes daily communication with parents through communication books and point sheets. In addition, telephone calls are made daily for any absent students. The parent coordinator sends flyers, bi-monthly newsletters and calendars for parent workshops, support groups and invitations to school celebrations and Parent/Teacher conferences. The school has an open door policy for parents to meet with administration to discuss any concerns. This work to date has resulted in an increase in the number of students expressing the importance of learning in order to be prepared for high school and college.
- To support progress toward college and career readiness, parents, teachers and students complete a Level 1 Vocational Assessment beginning at age 12. The results of these assessments are shared with all stakeholders and are included on the student’s Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Furthermore, students are often interested in careers as a result of their exposure to entertainment and community workers they come into contact with, such as firefighters, policeman, doctors and lawyers. The principal prioritizes that students know about many other careers and the requirements needed to apply for jobs. The school has held an Annual Career Fair with members from the community. Students were given an opportunity to listen to presentations, ask questions and interact with the presenters. By engaging parents through a range of activities and opportunities, the school encourages them to be a part of students’ academic success.