



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 032 Samuel Mills Sprole

Elementary School K032

**317 Hoyt Street
Brooklyn
NY 11231**

Principal: Denise Watson-Adin

**Date of review: January 29, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

The School Context

P.S. 032 Samuel Mills Sprole is an elementary school with 502 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 8% Asian, 22% Black, 26% Hispanic, and 41% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 23% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.3%.

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	Celebration	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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that all curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning standards and embed the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are thoughtfully revised to provide access for all learners.

Impact

The school's coherence in curricula and academic tasks both promotes college and career readiness and student cognitive engagement.

Supporting Evidence

- In all curricula documents reviewed, Common Core alignment is evident from *Go Math!* and *Exemplars to Teacher's College* in literacy across subjects. The principal shared that although these curricular resources provide a frame for instruction, they are not "geared to the needs of students with disabilities or English Language Learners who need to engage with a balance of relevant grade-level texts to build fluency, and complex texts to prepare them for middle school and beyond." Therefore, teachers consistently base curricula revisions on analysis of student work and data to ensure that all students are cognitively engaged.
- The principal shared that a common goal is for all tasks to encourage student independence with multiple opportunities for them to demonstrate thinking. For example, students read informational texts in history, experimented with potential and kinetic energy in science, and studied artwork by applying their prior knowledge and reading and writing skills learned in their content area classes.
- Teachers spoke to the adjustments they make to curricula. One teacher offered that after engaging in a protocol with her team, "we realized that the way the Teacher's College unit approached character did not meet the needs of our struggling readers." Teachers looked back at their pre-assessment and students who had scored a one. They used a video and asked students to note character actions and behaviors. This resulted in increased understanding by the targeted group of students in an understanding of the difference between character and traits.
- Unit plans include success curricula that clearly identify what students will master incrementally throughout the "investigation." For example, in a fifth grade unit, students will be able to provide text based evidence to support a claim using a comparative structure and features, and craft a conclusion that restates the claim and leaves the reader with a final thought. In a second grade unit covering the New York City community, students gather information about the differences and similarities between urban, suburban, and rural communities, and compare and contrast change in neighborhoods over time.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress across grades and subjects. Across classrooms there are missed opportunities to fully capture student understanding.

Impact

Teachers use common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction, and students have opportunities to reflect on and assess their work. However, in-class checks for understanding do not always lead to adjustments, or to students fully owning their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- There is ample evidence that student progress is assessed in multiple ways from baseline and post assessments, running records, and conference notes, to Measures of Student Learning, math, and ELAP reading assessments. Reading and writing assessment data is tracked to indicate student progress in sight word recognition, reading level, and writing. Math data indicates student progress in operations and algebraic thinking in grade 4, and numbers and operations in grade 2. This data is used to group students by ability and/or level, and to determine areas that require re-teaching. This was in evidence across classrooms, and, in particular, in the kindergarten math center where students engaged in activities based on a skill in which they needed practice.
- Students recognize that the purpose for using rubrics is so they “know what to do even if there is a sub.” As one student shared, “We use rubrics so we know what to work on like transition words, and how they fit into our narrative writing,” and knowing “what is positive and what they want me to fix.” The Teachers College learning progression rubrics in informational and narrative writing provide students with a window into requirements for work products from second through sixth grades. Thus, students have a concrete way to self-assess their work, and to see where they are in their progress toward upper grade-level work. Students also reflect on their learning with checklists and rubrics and during one-on-one time with teachers.
- In review of reading assessment scores, teachers noticed that although independent reading levels were consistently high, this did not correlate to the assessment scores wherein the same group of students did not earn a 2 or a 2.5 on the assessment. This heightened awareness of the need to “tighten” assessments, and rethink questions posed to students in discussions of texts. Teachers, therefore, use Depth of Knowledge as a resource for creating questions with greater rigor, and are focused on consistently requiring students to provide evidence-based responses. This also resulted in teachers agreeing to break questions down with students to ensure deeper comprehension.
- When asked, most teachers shared that they use data to reteach and to form groups, a practice that is consistent. Additionally, there is evidence on classroom and hallway bulletin boards that students receive feedback on their work consistently in “glows and “grows.” Although several teachers checked in with students and recorded notes on clipboards during lessons, checks for what students understood throughout lessons were infrequent. Therefore, it was less clear if students sufficiently own their own progress, or hold a deep enough understanding of their next steps beyond “use more transition words” or “fix what I got wrong.”

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across many classrooms teachers implement strategies that provide multiple entry points into content, discussions, and work products for all learners.

Impact

Students are therefore engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, and demonstrate higher order thinking in work products and discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- In a third grade lesson reviewed, students engaged in discussion centers based on reading level and need. All students read the same text, but entered it in different ways. Students reading at a higher level annotated and selected excerpts of importance from the text. Several students worked with iPads to analyze character and to discuss unfamiliar vocabulary with visual supports and a character trait bank to support written responses. At the image center, students engaged in a “write around” and used accountable word stems to discuss what they noticed in a picture. The quote center offered students a choice of two text excerpts to write a response to and to elaborate on in discussion. The purpose of the lesson was to engage students in identifying character traits that are supported by text details.
- Fifth graders engaged in a study of the Bill of Rights by first listing what they believed were United States citizens’ rights. Student triads actively conferred with each other, and, during class discussion, connected their ideas and prior knowledge to the Bill of Rights. Students understood the purpose, “we have to figure out which amendments were violated” in a text that described a college student’s freedom of speech case. Students applied what they learned in pairs and during whole group discussion. Text summaries were provided for targeted students. In a third grade science class, students engaged in a hands-on experiment to determine if the speed of a ball rolling down a ramp will change if the height of the ramp is adjusted. They began by creating a hypothesis to predict the outcome of the experiment. Data collection sheets with additional prompts and hypotheses were given to targeted students. Students shared their understanding with each other.
- Fourth graders worked to peer edit each other’s historical narratives and were provided with a checklist to record their partner’s use of transitions, leads, and conclusions. The teacher modeled the use of the editing checklist and “how to focus on one concept at a time.” The lesson’s focus was to teach students how to assess writing using a checklist. At its conclusion, students reflected: “this helped me organize my friend’s work,” “if we had no checklist we would have messed up stories;” and “it helps us to see what the writer has and doesn’t have.” Peer feedback was conducted very differently in a third grade math class where students engaged in a gallery walk to provide feedback on each other’s math tasks that could be solved in multiple ways. This resulted in students noticing and wondering: “Why did you count by tens?” and “Why did you split 156 that way?” with little teacher directive. The teacher circulated and took notes to prepare for the math congress to follow. Students were in mixed level groups so they could hear each other’s thinking and see alternative solutions. Given that the tasks were collaboratively done, there was greater opportunity for students to engage in productive struggle and inquiry with support from peers.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Parents receive ongoing communication on their children’s progress connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers receive ongoing training and feedback to align to school leaders’ expectations. Parents understand their children’s progress toward meeting school-wide academic expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- A parent whose two children attend the school expressed her appreciation for the personalized attention given her children by all of the teachers. “Teachers are dedicated and caring and this is a safe environment for students to take risks.” Another spoke of the inquiry projects that get her child “really excited.” A parent whose two children are enrolled in the NEST program noted that all staff are in constant communication with her. She meets regularly with a team of teachers who work with her children. “I bring my concerns and they are willing to try any way to help. I couldn’t ask for more.” Parents receive monthly grade-specific newsletters, and ‘First Fridays’ offer an opportunity to discuss current projects and how to support their children’s progress. Parents are invited to visit their children’s classrooms, and enjoy the publishing parties where they feel enormous pride in their children’s accomplishments. Additionally, teachers are available every Tuesday to meet with parents, and ongoing email communication is a common practice. “I can also speak with a teacher right on the spot at dismissal.”
- Several parents are Learning Leaders and assist in classrooms, the lunchroom, dance class, and the library. One parent offered that her son’s teacher gives her ideas to work on at home so “we can be on the same page.” The principal shared that families have access to resources in a database from My Library NYC. Parents also have access to vblogs and voice threads that are used over the summer to connect parents, students, and teachers in book discussions posted on voice thread.
- The principal, new to the school community, hosts “Fireside Chats” to familiarize herself with families, share her academic expectations, and discuss new ideas, concerns, or issues. Topics for discussions include Grade One Success Criteria, math exemplars, and Common Core Math.
- All teachers are aware of the expectations the principal holds for improving instruction, providing entry for all learners, and assessing what students know throughout lessons. Professional development fosters knowledge building in practices that hone teachers’ capacity for addressing the identified targets.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that promote Common Core aligned curricula to engage all learners. Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for targeted students.

Impact

The teams' work results in strengthening school-wide instructional practices and progress for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- In the third grade team meeting, teachers used a protocol for looking deeply at one student's work who they had been following for several weeks, and whose work across content areas improved as a result. The presenting teacher posed a focusing question for the team to consider: How do we help the student differentiate between a reason and an example because when he is trying to say more about a reason, he just gives another reason?" Team members asked clarifying questions, and then scored the work and normed their results. This led to actionable steps to support the student with writing a thesis supported with reasons with a focus on reasons first, thesis after, midpoint check ins, and models that exemplify how to develop reasons. The presenter recognized that she could "teach into" the student's examples to make clearer connections with him, and provide a visual representation of the connections to help him organize his writing. Another teacher noted that she had engaged students in brainstorming using a web and sentence starters, and once students had mastered this technique, stopped. This might be the right time to bring such support back. This led to a discussion about the standard this work is aligned to, and the uniform criteria for paragraph writing, referenced as include a hook, lead, and three reasons.
- Teachers shared that they are growing professionally across experience levels and see their professional learning and teaching strengthened, thus building their capacity; As one teacher offered, "I have been teaching for sixteen years and I feel like I can get stagnant when I know students need a lot more."
- One teacher shared that she values the work she engages in with her grade team where they plan and revisit their curricula. Several of her colleagues attended a workshop that introduced protocols for looking at units and how, through this process, to become intentional about differentiating instruction to meet students' needs. This provided her with a lens for her planning. "Now I consider how I can move a student." This professional learning extends to how the team looks at their assessments. The NEST team works together to "norm ourselves" given the wide range of classes taught. "When we look at students as a whole, we use the same criteria" even though "high" might look a bit different for each class. Using *Teachers College* curricula is a starting point, the team then "breaks it down" for groups of students who may require a different entry point. Additionally, given the diverse population on each grade, "we hone in on enrichment," and consider ways that small group experiences can "push our higher-order thinking students."