



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 075 Mayda Cortiella

Elementary School K075

**95 Grove Street
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Yolanda Williams

**Date of review: December 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Audrey Madison**

The School Context

P.S. 075 Mayda Cortiella is an elementary school with 439 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 21% Black, 74% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 16% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.8%.

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 <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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers, including cluster teachers, are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaboration that promotes the achievement of school goals. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The work of collaborative teacher teams leads to progress toward the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers have built their leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Team minutes and planning documents for professional learning indicate teachers lead professional development sessions for colleagues. Kindergarten and first grade members of the Professional Learning Committee presented training on differentiated instruction over a four-week period. Teachers' reflections on that training identify tiered work as a common strategy to be used in classrooms. One teacher from the Cycles of Learning team offered professional development on higher order thinking questions. After follow up walk-throughs by team members, it was noted, "teachers have students design questions prior to some lessons, such as, 'I wonder' questions about learning topics."
- The school established a cycles of learning team as a result of a borough support initiative. The team includes grade-level teachers, the writing cluster teacher, and the English as a Second Language teacher. In one instance, the team analyzed Measures of Student Learning data for writing and determined a weakness in mechanics in the upper grades and the need to describe characters with descriptive words and text clues in the lower grades. The team devised instructional calendars for skills building, in both upper and lower grades. Additionally, the writing cluster teacher applied her experience from scoring New York State English Language Arts (NYSELA) exams and helped to develop and implement the use of writing rubrics aligned to NYSELA rubrics, which are now used to assess writing skills across the school.
- The fifth grade teacher team used the *ATLAS Protocol for Looking at Student Work* to determine if the use of graphic organizers, teaching charts, and thinking maps had been successful instructional strategies to improve student ability to write standards-based opinions. The teachers found those strategies had supported one inquiry student to state her opinion in a clear introduction, and use a few more text-based supporting details, compared to her first opinion piece. The team decided to continue the use of thinking maps and teaching charts, offer specific graphic organizers to elicit more details and include modeling different types of introductions.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders and staff communicate high expectations that are connected to Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson *Framework for Learning*. School leaders are developing systems to train and hold staff accountable and provide feedback to parents regarding students' progress toward expectations set.

Impact

Training and follow-up are improving teacher accountability to higher expectations. However, while the school continues to strive to establish a culture for learning which clearly conveys the message that they prepare students for college and career, systems are not yet fully established and not all families receive ongoing feedback to help them understand student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of written observations emphasizes the expectation that teachers engage students through questioning and discussion and use assessment in instruction, in addition to other components of the Danielson *Framework for Learning*. School leaders provide written feedback such as, "Begin to formulate questions that will promote high levels of student participation", "Allow students to work in small groups or with partners." "Try using stem starters that were provided to assist with discussion.", "Provide opportunities for constant self-checks.", "Teach students to monitor their progress.", and "Plan a range of questions that reach Webb's Depth of Knowledge Levels 3 and 4." Ongoing systems for continuous follow-up in terms of teacher implementation of feedback are developing.
- Multiple professional learning sessions have been offered which focused on questioning for classroom discussion and higher order thinking questions. School leaders ensured that targeted teachers participated in the trainings. Additional suggestions were offered to individual teachers to support growth. Systems for assessing the effectiveness of professional development sessions, however, are not yet fully established.
- Efforts have been made to provide information sessions to parents about student progress. Parents of up to four selected students per class receive invitations in English and Spanish to attend student-led conferences on the first Tuesday of each month. Students share what they are learning and samples of their work with their parents. On the second Tuesday of each month, the school offers parent workshops pertaining to the curricula. However, Tuesday conferences and workshops have had limited family participation thus far. Some interviewed parents expressed they were not aware that these opportunities were offered.
- Monthly newsletters for each grade are backpacked to families identifying the topics being studied in the four content areas, as well as upcoming special events and reminders. A first grade newsletter provides actual learning targets, which more explicitly informs and supports parents about what students are learning. Most other grade newsletters provide broad topics, offering limited information to parents. Parents expressed a need for better communication about what their children are learning and how their children are doing.
- The sole content of a college and career ready bulletin board posted in the main hallway displayed decorative graduation caps with staff names written on them.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions in ensuring that curricula are aligned to Common Core and/or content standards. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

All students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, have access to rigorous, coherent curricula which emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders selected content-based writing as this year’s instructional focus to further develop students’ ability to express their thoughts, explain their work, and demonstrate their learning in writing. As part of non-fiction units, teachers design performance tasks for either science or social studies and align to Common Core writing standards.
- Unit plans reflect essential questions that guide teachers in determining performance tasks. A third grade essential question for a social studies unit posed, “How do culture, geography and history shape a community?” After studying environmental regions of Africa, students were given a performance task requiring them to write an argumentative essay with their opinion and supporting details to express which environment they would like to live in if they had a choice between a savanna, a desert, or a rainforest. A second grade essential question inquired, “How can I share my knowledge of Earth materials with others?” with a culminating science task of creating an informative/explanatory booklet. Fifth graders pondered, “How did the interactions with Europeans effect the lives of the Native Americans?” which led to an opinion piece on European exploration and its effects.
- Culminating tasks require students to apply knowledge of academic vocabulary. For example, a first grader read his written informational text about crabs, having included words such as habitat, survive, and predator. Third graders included language such as environment, human survival, hydrated, savanna, and oxygen to convey their opinion responses to, “Which environment would you prefer to live in and why?” Students are consistently required to use text-based evidence across content areas.
- The school uses New York City core curriculum materials, such as *ReadyGen*, *GO Math!*, and follows the New York City scope and sequence for science and social studies. The curriculum is further supplemented by various trade books, resources from the Common Core Library, and articles from magazines such as *Time for Kids*. In math, students are expected to learn and apply different strategies to solve problems.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a school-wide belief that students learn best when teachers actively use assessment in instruction and engage student participation through questioning and discussion.

Impact

Teachers accurately understand their students meeting the needs of learners so that all students produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In preparation for reading about Nigeria becoming a British colony, third grade students posed questions and responses about independence during a class discussion in social studies. Students wondered, “Do Mexican people have independence?”, “Do British people have independence?”, Other students offered their thoughts, “Maybe they have a different independence day.”, “Just like in Dominican Republic, they celebrate another day.” Later in the lesson, the teacher asked, “Why do you think there was fighting in Nigeria?” Students responded, “Maybe they didn’t have a good leader.”, “So they would have control over their own government.” “So they could have a new government.”, and “The government is controlling the people.”
- In a fifth grade class students were asked to turn and talk in groups or with partners to summarize a passage. While all students were observed in discussion with one another, one group’s genuine discussion captured the tone of class discourse. “I agree with you. Robbie wanted to be a good citizen.”, “That’s not really the main idea. Robbie didn’t have to give back the wallet.”, “In my opinion, he was thoughtful.” After listening in on some conversations, the teacher made entries on a weekly school-designed *Checking for Understanding* form to track student progress toward learning objectives.
- In a first grade class, students sat in pairs and dictated related facts to 20 to their partners. One student was observed stating, “ $20 + 9 = 29$ and $29 - 20 = 9$ ”, as his partner wrote down what he said. The teacher conferenced with other students and recorded her assessment notes on the school form used by teachers to reflect on student progress and inform instructional decisions for grouping and re-teaching.
- In one third grade Integrated Co-Teaching class, students had a choice of tasks: create a thinking map, write a short essay, or write a play. All tasks required students to decide if they agreed or disagreed with the statement, “Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka is very similar to civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.” and were graded based on use of textual evidence to support ideas. Second grade writing for an informational text, “All About Earth Materials,” included a table of contents, student-drawn diagrams, and writing based on students’ experiences with humus, clay, and sand. The work of kindergarten students demonstrated alignment with Common Core Standards as students created a circle map about fall changes and dictated one fact about the season’s changes or activities.
- Across classrooms, students pose questions to teachers, “Can I use pictures?”, “Can I write it in a thinking cloud?”, “Can I write my essay using a thinking map?”, and “I wonder if I can use a number line.” Teacher responses convey the message, “Use whatever strategy will help you best.”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned to the school's curricula, as well as consistently check-in, track student understanding, and provide students with self-assessment opportunities.

Impact

Students and their teachers are aware and informed of strengths and next steps in learning. Teachers make effective adjustments to instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The *P.S.75 Checks for Understanding Policy* has been implemented school wide. A weekly form is used for reading, writing, and math, in which teachers across classrooms identify skills to be assessed, and check off whether students have mastered, need support, or did not understand skills, indicating the need for re-teaching. In addition to the form protocols used, across classrooms, teachers are adding notes that reflect adjustment to instruction. Teachers' notes indicate that some students were able to demonstrate mastery when they had verbal opportunities to express their thinking, that some students' mastery of a skill was impaired by either providing too much detail or not sufficient detail, that some students needed more picture clues to support their understanding, and that one teacher planned forming a small group of select students for strategy teaching and that another teacher needed to ask more "prove it" questions.
- Student-friendly Common Core-aligned rubrics are used in early grades to support student writing. An informative/explanatory writing rubric in second grade guides students to introduce the topic, use facts and definitions, and provide a concluding statement. Criteria for a kindergarten-writing rubric include levels of drawing, organization, and writing that includes dictation. Upper grades use the *New York State Grade 4-5 Expository Writing Evaluation* rubric. Teachers use these rubrics for grading and to provide actionable feedback to students such as "Very organized with good linking words." and "Your opinion could have been stronger if you included at least three points of evidence from text." Students were able to use the rubrics to articulate why they received certain grades and explain the areas in which they needed to improve.
- Classroom teachers scored and recorded results of content writing on a writing task data sheet, used school wide. Teachers have analyzed students' opinion/argumentative pieces, which are scored based on the use of four point standards-aligned rubrics to determine an overall score for each of their students. Data is being compiled as students complete their first informative piece to monitor student progress toward meeting Common Core Standards.
- Reading levels are assessed three times per year and used to ensure that students maintain two books on their reading level and one book above their independent reading level in their book baggies. Math grades for end-of-unit chapter tests and other informal assessments are recorded and used for instructional decisions as well.