



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 081 Thaddeus Stevens School

Elementary School K081

**990 DeKalb Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11221**

Principal: Cheryl Ault-Barker

**Date of review: November 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

The School Context

P.S. 081 Thaddeus Stevens is an elementary school with 308 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 56% Black, 38% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 8% English Language Learners and 25% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.3%.

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	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	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	Celebration	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:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula to determine and track student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

Teachers use, common assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. These results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Data from the first interim assessment revealed that kindergarten and first grade students needed more practice with phonics and phonemic awareness. As a result, students were grouped to work with a teacher trained in the Wilson Reading Program during 5th period intervention block.
- The school has a kindergarten through grade 6 grading, promotion and retention policy that clearly articulates the grading scale and grading procedures. Also included in the policy is a "Philosophy and Purpose of Grading" document that explains how grading serves multiple functions, including that it provides information and guidance.
- Similarly, in grades 3 through 5, the English Language Arts interim assessment data revealed that students needed additional time on task in order to build their vocabulary. Teachers spiraled vocabulary skills into lessons with a renewed focus on paraphrasing.
- Students spoke about using rubrics in most assignments and how the use of the rubric helps them to get a better grade. For example, feedback given on how to extend their stories with a personal narrative writing assignment reads, "add more details by using who, what, when, where, why and how."

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 that is informed by the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teachers' pedagogical practices across classrooms engage students in appropriately challenging tasks; however, there are missed opportunities to provide all students with the necessary scaffolds and/or extensions.

Supporting Evidence

- A grade 2 writing lesson observed involved modeling how to edit and revise writing with the use of a rubric while the whole class was seated on the rug. The teacher used her actual writing, color coded to emphasize different elements of the writing, to model the revisions and called on students throughout the activity while also allowing for turn and talk with a partner. However, some students struggled with some responses. For example, when asked by teacher, "Why did I write this part in red?" some students struggled while others were able to respond, "to make it exciting" or "to add more details."
- In a grade 5 social studies lesson on expeditionary learning, students were responding to a teacher's questioning around reading strategies. However, due to the heavily teacher-directed approach and limited use of technology, opportunities were missed for scaffolding and extending the learning experiences, especially for those students who struggle most.
- In a kindergarten, grade 1 and 2 blended class, students were engaged in a science lesson about the environment in which they live. Whole group instruction was provided via the interactive white board. The teacher charted students' responses. There were multiple entry points into the lesson including students having to complete a writing assignment, charting and drawing a picture. Additionally, group work involved a 3 tier approach: Tier 1 (strategic) required students to complete the main idea and details chart independently, Tier 2 (benchmark) required a similar end product with minimal adult support provided and Tier 3 (intensive) required more support.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leader and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school makes purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness while providing access to the curricula for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses curricula that are Common Core-aligned with integrated instructional shifts. These programs include GO Math! supplemented with EngageNY, Core Knowledge for English Language Arts (ELA) in kindergarten through grade 2, Expeditionary Learning in grades 3-5, and New York State scope and sequence for science. The staff, with assistance from coaches, revises the curriculum to adjust pacing and to include the necessary supports to meet the needs of all students. Teachers of students with disabilities attended professional learning groups given by a Teacher Center coach to improve use of strategies to help all students access the curricula.
- Lessons and academic tasks include the integration of the instructional shifts. Examples of shifts in English Language Arts include: a grade 4 unit plan requiring students to provide examples from a text to support their stance and drawing inference from text. It also asks students to draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research.
- Grade 4 teachers reviewed student work and data on the New York City ELA Baseline performance task specific to opinion writing. Teachers then refined academic tasks based on findings. For example, they were able to make a list of participant descriptive observations, craft notes from a student's point of view, brainstorm possible next steps, and create a bank of take-aways for participants to use as strategies for re-teaching the skills.
- As an extension to the grade 5 curriculum, students participate in the Medgar Evers College Educational Pipeline Program focused on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, as a means of exposure to college and college readiness.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leader communicates high expectations regarding professionalism and instruction connected to the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* to the entire staff. The school leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations for all students to families.

Impact

School leaders have a system of accountability for these expectations and staff provides ongoing feedback to families to help them understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal provides a weekly newsletter to staff regarding expectations. For example, the November 12 newsletter had the following reminders regarding school-wide expectations for every classroom: Differentiated instruction in the classroom, (k-2) students will read at home for one hour a night, (3-5) must read at least 2 hours, recording of students' reading levels by teachers, implement and monitor the tracking of student goals, use of data binders to track student progress, lesson plans with all components of an effective lesson, and learning targets visible for all students.
- The school communicates with the parents via special assemblies, Parent Teacher Association meetings, emails, phone calls and designated weekly times for parents to come in, and workshops. Examples of parent workshop topics include educating parents on ELA and math testing, which helps to familiarize parents with standards and how to support their children academically at home, and Learning Leaders Training, which are a series of workshops to equip families of pre-kindergarten through grade 5 students with information and strategies to help them succeed academically and reinforce the Common Core Learning Standards at home.
- The school partnered with Change for Kids, an organization that works with elementary schools to engage students in academic achievement and developing 21st Century skills such as creativity, communication, collaboration and critical thinking.
- Parents are consistently provided with their child's progress via progress reports, conferences, letters and ClassDojo, an online system that allows for quick, in the moment parent engagement by providing parents immediate messages regarding their child's performance.

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

Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Professional collaborations result in strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers and in progress towards goals for students^[HM1].

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in subject and grade teams to focus on shared students, analyzing student work, creating next steps for re-teaching and reflection. Teachers discuss standards, brainstorm strategies, and share best practices in an effort to improve student outcomes. Protocols are established and include agendas, sign in sheets and notes.^[HM2]
- Teachers break into grade level groupings to review student work and data from end of unit assessments, teacher-made assessments, Measures Of Student Learning and reading inventory. Based on analysis, teachers create spreadsheets with questions specific to standards and use the information compiled to reteach and drive instruction for their students.^[HM3]
- Teachers expressed that the collaborative process has helped them improve their open ended questioning skills, increased emphasis on the school-wide focus on reading, writing and strategies for getting students to read more. Professional development topics that have been generated as a result of the teacher team meetings include higher order thinking skills, open-ended questioning, Webb's *Depth of Knowledge*, Bloom's taxonomy, and the 3-2-1 strategy.
- As a result of collaborative inquiry and data and item analysis, teachers were able to strategize and provide support daily during intervention period. Due to the fact that it is still relatively early in the school, it is difficult to measure the extent of the impact.