



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S./I.S. 104 The Fort Hamilton School

Elementary-Middle School K104

**9115 5th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11209**

Principal: Marie DiBella

**Date of review: November 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

The School Context

P.S./I.S. 104 The Fort Hamilton School is an elementary-middle school with 1,239 students from kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 22% Asian, 3% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 47% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 13% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.5%.

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	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
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through training and other school-wide structures. Staff forms partnerships with families, which effectively communicate the expectations regarding student progress.

Impact

A collective understanding of the expectations of the school leads to a culture of mutual accountability for staff and successful home-school alliances, which support the progress of all students towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School-wide memoranda and administrative conference notes provide staff members with clear details on the expectations for instruction. During the first faculty conference of the year, school administration conducted a review of these expectations with staff, which serves as a reference for all on the requirements for instruction. In a set of administrative conference notes, expectations for improving math instruction include, "All teachers will assign and review one exemplar with each unit test and an additional task," and states that teachers should continue to work on their questioning skills and accountable talk to challenge and support all students to reach their potential.
- Teacher led professional development is ongoing and occurs weekly. A committee of teachers in collaboration with the school administration develops and designs professional development. The committee is responsible for developing the professional development plan that serves as a living document where teachers respond to the type and quality of professional development and whether current cycles should continue throughout the year. During a recent Election Day professional development session, teachers discussed and came to a common understanding of "What does good teaching look like?" which serves as a reference and vision for instruction for all staff. Teachers report that grade leaders also facilitate working collectively towards school-wide instructional expectations.
- The school provides multiple structures to offer parents insight on the expectations of monthly units of study and Common Core Learning Standards. The school provides Learning Outcomes documents developed by teachers to all families and lists specific skills that students need to master in order to meet the Common Core and other content area standards. In grade 8, the November outcomes for English Language Arts (ELA) state, "students will be analyzing texts and making connections and distinctions between individuals, ideas and events, and determining the central ideas while conducting research projects." Parents reported that these documents guide discussion about school and enable them to support their children at home by helping them understand the expectations of what they need to comprehend each month. In addition, an open door policy and regular emails with school staff enables parents to understand how their child is performing in school. Conversations and workshops on Lexile levels help parents to understand how their child is performing in ELA and allows families to support further their children at home.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points in appropriately challenging tasks and student discussions but the supports and extensions are not yet always strategic and of high quality.

Impact

Work products and discussions lead students to higher order thinking but have not yet resulted in ownership for all students in the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In all classrooms, the workshop model and group work is prevalent. Students engage in group work with guiding questions or collaboratively on projects. In a grade 7 science class, the teacher asked students to work with a group to share ideas and determine a testable question based on independent and dependent variables. In one group, students were able to use ideas from other peers to develop collectively the following, “Does the shade of a color affect the way we see it?” Another group developed, “Does the type of soap affect the ‘foaminess’ when exposed to water?” Both groups decided to develop the design of their experiments based on their testable question. This level of thinking in combination with a collective understanding of the purpose through conversation was not as evident across the vast majority of classrooms.
- In a grade 8 class, after conducting a close read of *Life of Pi*, groups of students chose from a set of questions, discussed and came to consensus regarding a group response. In one group, the students debated whether the main character was delusional based on his actions in the story. Four out of five students concluded that the main character was delusional while the remaining student stated he was not. Using several parts of the text, the student defended his position and debated with his peers stating, “This is not a delusion. He connected with the tiger at the zoo. A tiger is just an animal, simple and true. They act as they do. He needed a friend because he lost his family.” Other students shared, “He is delusional cause he is dehydrated. How can you connect with this animal? This is just his loneliness and dehydration which caused him to be delusional.” In another grade 8 class, although students chose the structure of how to express their written responses and understood the expectations of how to be successful in the task, the quality of some student work products reflected statements that aligned with Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) level 2.
- In a grade 5 math class, students reviewed an assessment question. The teacher grouped students based on their incorrect response to a particular question. In one group, students reviewed each step of the task using a graphic organizer and together determined an answer to the following question, “Why is your answer reasonable?” Students came to consensus that their answer was reasonable as “the estimate is close to the exact.” However, this level of engagement and thinking was not prevalent across some classes. In a grade 2 class, students were engaged in writing informational books. A review of student projects reflected some projects with high-level responses, yet others did not demonstrate the same degree of DOK level 3 and 4 sophistication.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that the school-wide curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using data for all students.

Impact

Curricula and tasks reflect a school-wide coherence and provide access for all students to be cognitively engaged to promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses multiple sources to align their curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards. In ELA, teacher-created curriculum maps reflect alignment to the standards using a workshop model approach incorporating teaching points and tasks using components such as shared reading, read aloud, and writing. Similarly, in science and social studies, the maps reflect the workshop approach and include supplemental resources such as Glencoe and Houghton Mifflin programs. In math, the school utilizes *Envisions* and *Math Connect* programs.
- A review of lesson plans and tasks reveals a strong integration of close reading, and an emphasis on citing evidence. In a grade 5 math task, students were required to annotate their word problems in order to understand the key words, phrases and questions. A review of several ELA lesson plans indicated the use of annotation strategies such as color-coding, writing in margins and underlining. In several social studies and ELA curriculum maps, reference to Common Core Learning Standards one and three on citing text evidence was prevalent in the planning documents.
- Teachers use data from assessments and student work to refine lessons for low, medium and high-level student groups. Teachers report that during grade-level meetings, they discuss strategies to implement based on their findings. A review of several lesson plans revealed the use of student grouping and modification of tasks, all centered on the same learning objective. In a grade 6 lesson plan, the task required all students to determine the volume of a rectangular prism. However, the tasks provided and numbers used varied by group. Planning for the top group consisted of creating their own word problems where students have to design three rectangular prisms for a new brand of food and use a checklist to draw models of each box, label the dimensions, provide their volumes and develop their design. For another group, students had to use visual picture prompts and an additional attachment to find the volume of rectangular prisms and come to consensus as to the measurement and design on creating a word problem. In a grade 4 math lesson plan, one group of students is assigned additional math word problems to practice and further their understanding of multiplication while another group works on an integrated math and science project using their knowledge of the topic. In a grade 8 ELA lesson plan, students are grouped for a discussion based on Lexile level and an analysis of responses from a task on a *Story of Keesh*.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned to the curricula to provide a portrait of student mastery and varied checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact

Effective adjustments and meaningful feedback allow teachers to meet student learning needs that lead to student awareness of next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- In all classrooms, evidence of the use of rubrics or checklists to assess student work products in all subject areas was prevalent. In ELA, teachers use assessments such as *Fountas and Pinnell* running records and assess student levels based on Lexile. In math, *Early Childhood Assessment in Math* (ECAM) is used for kindergarten through grade 2 while baseline and end of unit assessments from *Envisions*, *Math Connects* and Prentice Hall for pre-algebra classes are utilized. Teachers create performance tasks in social studies and science based on the city wide assessments. School wide grading policies align across all subjects and combine percentages into performance levels. Teachers report that these tasks are essential to determine the level of understanding of students and provide them feedback to guide next steps and grouping in instruction.
- Students are aware of how to read their rubrics and understand the expectations toward the next performance level. Several students reported that they use rubrics to determine where they are academically and where they need to move. In addition, students reported that their teacher provides them feedback and that they even get next steps when they receive a level 4. A review of student folders reflected child friendly rubrics with feedback on where the child is currently demonstrating strengths and an area of focus. In one grade 1 student folder, a science task contained a rubric with visuals scored at a level 3 and next steps included, "Please use your finger stick" in order for the student to place spaces between words. Similar use of rubrics and feedback responses were evident in several student folders.
- Students were able to provide details on how they use their teachers' feedback. One student shared that after reviewing his teachers' feedback and having a conversation with him, he needed to work on integrating more transitional words into his writing. The teacher guided him to a website where he could research transitional words, and has begun to include them in his writing pieces. He stated that he now tries to include words such as "nevertheless." Another student shared that feedback from her teacher led to varied use of conjunctions in her writing. Her teacher stated that the use of too many conjunctions slows the audiences' read of her essay or can lead to contradictions. She stated that she now reviews her writing to make sure she does not include as many and her grades in the area of language are improving.
- School-wide, students have opportunities to self-reflect either individually or with a partner. A review of several self-reflection sheets across grades show students listing ways they would improve their work products. In a grade 7 reflection, a student states, "I will find better details" and "use the text" to look for the strongest details. Another student shared that she would use sentence starters while referring to the text in her writing.

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 professional collaborations, which have strengthened their capacity and act as integral, distributed structures for effective teacher leadership on instructional decision-making.

Impact

School-wide instructional coherence and collective decision making allow teachers to develop shared understanding of the school goals and make key decisions, which have increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Based on their review of state data, the school has decided to develop an inquiry focus on increasing ELA achievement for students with disabilities. Each grade decided on three students to target based on a review of grade-level student data. Grade-level teams focus on developing scaffolds and supports for the target students. They document all inquiry work using agendas and team notes. Monday meetings offer an opportunity for the sharing of strategies among all staff members to form cross grade instructional partnerships. For example, grade 4 and 8 teachers are working on using student topics of interest to engage all of their students, including those with disabilities, via Project Based Learning (PBL) and research. Similarly, another cross-grade partnership with grade 2 and 5 teachers is working on honing assessment practices to examine the level of engagement of target students when completing project based learning tasks.
- A review of grade 7 inquiry notes reflects the use of color-coding for annotation as a supportive strategy. In grade 8, one teacher reported a recent discussion of their target students use of color-coding as a means for annotation and use of academic vocabulary. Similarly while observing a grade 6 meeting, teachers reviewed their target student work to discuss how students were performing based on their last decision to incorporate different colors for coding and annotation of texts during close reading and use of a particular graphic organizer. Teachers discussed how each student performed when integrating each strategy and shared how the strategies support their academic improvement.
- Monthly chats with the principal serve as a forum for all teachers to review decisions made from inquiry teams and progress of students. During the chats with the principal, conversations serve as an opportunity to share best practices, methodologies and student work in an effort to track student progress. During October and November chats, all grade-level teams identified and discussed selected student profiles, noting their services, strategies implemented, and the impact on student learning and next steps. In kindergarten, teachers noted progress as two students moved up reading levels and another began to use separate lines in their writing. In grade 6, students are showing progress in making inferences, and using academic vocabulary. In addition, teachers reported that based on the performance of students, they alter curricula pacing calendars to allow for more flexibility within units of study. In grade 3, teachers expanded a unit on the distributive property as the students demonstrated difficulty in their understanding of the concept.