



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**P.S. 105 The Blythebourne**

**Elementary K105**

**1031 59 Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11219**

**Principal: Johanna Castronovo**

**Date of review: May 3, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Clarence Williams**

## The School Context

P.S. 105, The Blythebourne is an elementary school with 1,681 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 92% Asian, 0% Black, 4% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 50% English Language Learners and 6% 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 98.5%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness with families. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students

### Impact

School leaders and teachers successfully partner with families to support student progress toward expectations and provide clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports to ensure that students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate with parents regarding instructional expectations. A grade 1 parent engagement workshop provided parents methods to support them in helping their children improve in writing. For example, the workshop agenda listed clarifying questions for parents to ask their children such as: “Does your story have a beginning, middle and end?” or “Does your beginning tell about the character setting?” The workshop also provided parents with questions that can help them motivate their children if they are not putting in the necessary effort. The workshop concluded with providing questions and techniques for parents to share with students, such as rules for capitalization, punctuation, and tips for spelling difficult words. The parent Newsletter for grade 4 parents assisted parents with State assessments. The Newsletter informed parents of testing dates in Math and English Language Arts but also after-school dates for supporting English Language Learners. These units of study included all subject areas such as genre immersion, geometry and measurement, the physical world: properties of water, and immigration and westward movement.
- School leaders helped develop a Parent Lending Library. Parents and students can borrow library books in their native language. This library was developed in part because of the parents’ need to help their children in reading. The library is located in the parent room and parents run it. Several parents shared that their child’s reading level has improved over the course of the year. Parents have attributed this to parental access to the same reading materials that students have.
- The school has three guidance counselors that work with parents in their native language to help prepare students for the next level. Parents stated that they attend Parent Teachers’ Association meetings every month. Topics such as college readiness for K-12 learners are part of regular presentations. A parent involvement memorandum led to workshops facilitated by the guidance counselor and social worker and addressed the transition to Middle School and preparation for English Language Learners to succeed on State assessments.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### 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 and the instructional shifts, however, this was not evident in the vast majority of classrooms observed

### Impact

All students produce meaningful work products that reflect high levels of thinking and participation, however student ownership of their learning was not as yet evident in all classrooms visited.

### Supporting Evidence

- All classrooms provided evidence of instructional practices that demonstrate how students learn best. In a grade 5 bilingual class, students were engaged in a lesson in which they were required to orally describe the relationship between a good or a service and how it is produced. Students used the turn and talk protocol to discuss whether or not they could answer the question by looking at the resources. Students shared their responses with the entire class underscoring the belief that students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process.
- In a grade 4 shared reading exercise students were discussing elements of a historical fiction text. Students worked in groups and discussed what they see, what they think, and what they wonder. For example, based on the pictures in the text, students discussed who the characters were, what was taking place in the picture and what a description of the setting. Students were required to answer the questions based on textual evidence and then it was followed up with discussions in small and whole group integrating the instructional shifts.
- In a grade 1 English as Second Language class, students used OREO (opinion, reason, example, opinion, restate) in the class. Students were in differentiated groups based on reading levels. The discussion topic centered on their opinions of police officers. After reading the definition of a police officer during whole group, students broke up into small writing groups. One student felt that “they help people” and the reason given was “they are always around.” Another student’s opinion was “they have to deal with bad people.” There were missed opportunities for the majority of students to take ownership, for example there were few opportunities for students to expand on their thinking and discuss what the role of a police officer means to everyone in the class.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data

### Impact

The aligned curricula result in coherence across grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness for all students. Individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving students, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- All teachers use the Understanding by Design unit template when planning lessons. In a grade 1 writing unit, under the sub category of what students will know, the academic vocabulary contained in the unit is indicated. Lesson plans include teaching points and specific skills that will be taught. Plans also document the various scaffolds that will be utilized to ensure all students will have access to the content-concepts to be learned. For example, plans indicate that visual learners will use a content vocabulary chart to build on vocabulary in order to “access grade level complex text”. This was evidenced across all grades and subject areas.
- Instructional tasks are refined based on student work. In the grade 2 folktales and drama unit the grade 2 teachers stated that students struggled with fiction and demonstrated difficulty tying real world connections to the text. The unit was adjusted to allow students to draw on personal examples to better understand the readings they would encounter. For example, making connections between self, the text and the world was added to lessons. Additional learning targets, such as, “How do fables teach us life lessons?” were added, along with additional fables for students to read and discuss. For example the story, *The Runaway Pancake* was added for students to use as a comparison to the story, *The Gingerbread Man*.
- All kindergarten through grade 2 classes incorporates an inclusion model, ensuring that general education students and students with disabilities are exposed to the same curriculum and instructional practices. Professional development is provided to all general education teachers and paraprofessionals to assure best practices are used when teaching students with disabilities. All lesson plans and units incorporate strategies for multiple level learners. Groups are heterogeneous and all level 1 and 2 students meet with the Response to Intervention team (RTI) 3 to 5 times per week.
- Literacy is the instructional focus for this year. English Language Learners represent 50% of the student population. Both the school leaders and teaching staff believe that focusing on literacy will build capacity in all subject areas and will assist in preparing students for the next level. School leaders believe that all teachers are teachers of literacy and this belief is incorporated across all content areas.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### **Impact**

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Rubrics are used as a means of assessing and providing feedback to students and teachers. In a grade 1 English Language Arts class students use a self-monitoring comprehension strategy exit slip. Using the term "click" if they understand and "clunk" if they do not understand the concept that has been taught. The exit slip requires the students to check off the strategy that they used when they did not understand a concept. For example, a student used the strategy of looking at a picture as a visual aid to understand what the character was doing, while another student used a "read slower" strategy to understand vocabulary words. Students stated that the exit tickets help their understanding of material and they use it in all subjects.
- Actionable feedback is provided across all grades and subjects. In a grade 4 English class, feedback on an essay was given in the form of "Glows" and "Grows". Positive remarks given to students noted their clear writing and understanding of the text while "Grows" provided students clear steps to explain and expand their evidence. A writing rubric to assess students' grade level for writing is used school wide. Student work is noted as being on grade level, approaching grade level, and below grade level. Work that contains facts across multiple categories is considered above grade level while writing that contains mostly accurate facts would be assessed as approaching grade level. The consistent checking for understanding and effective feedback has resulted in a 31% increase in the passing rate on the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) in the writing section for 2015. Recent data indicates that positive growth will be seen again this school year.
- Higher order thinking opportunities were provided students across classrooms. For example, in a grade 3 self-contained math class, the teacher asked the students to think about what they did and what someone else would do differently when they practiced measuring an object. In a grade 1 English class the teacher asked students to explain what they do if they do not have enough details in their writing. Requiring students to think in this way allows for them to engage in critical thinking while also planning their next steps.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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**Findings**

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, including the instructional shifts. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

**Impact**

As a result of these collaborations there is school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. There are improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- At a grade 1 inquiry meeting, teachers discussed strategies to use to improve their students’ reading skills. The goal was to have students self-monitor self-correct when reading a grade level text, the team decided that the student could use the “click and clunk” strategy when self-assessing to document what was understood and what was not. Think-aloud strategies included reading a passage, pausing and making sense of what was read and having the student retell the passage. Monitoring the student’s progress included running records, pre-assessments, post assessments and the student’s work products.

At the inquiry meeting teaches focused on data that indicated that students were struggling with text dependent questions. The team discussed the use of and decided to use closed reading with multiple reads of the text and making annotations using the inquiry process. They also incorporated the practice of the think aloud, modeling the text and drawing conclusions. They discussed one student’s performance. The art teacher mentioned having trouble with the same student with interpretation of art and analyzing peer evaluation. The team decided to also incorporate sentence frames.

- During a meeting with teachers from various grades and subjects, one of the goals was to increase students’ using their personal experience when reading and writing. A teacher gave an example from a unit she taught on supermarkets. A student from Asia had a very different understanding of supermarkets compared to her classmates. The instruction was modified to represent her understanding of supermarkets while gradually introducing the student to western culture. One bilingual teacher shared her use of scaffolding to work with students that predominantly speak Spanish. Translating every question is not the practice but rather asking simple questions while they are in small groups promotes their being engaged. Some students even start with the alphabet but gradually develop their reading skills, show progress and reach their goals.