



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 119 Amersfort

Elementary School K119

**3829 Avenue K
Brooklyn
NY 11210**

Principal: Lisa Fernandez

**Date of review: April 21, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

P.S. 119 Amersfort is an elementary school with 409 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 14% Asian, 69% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 16% 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 96.2%.

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	Focus	Developing
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	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Communications from school leaders and staff are shared with families that are connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Impact

A system of accountability exists regarding high expectations for staff and families so they understand student progress toward the high expectations set for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The building leadership feels the expectations “are the same for teachers as kids...there is no hierarchy in the building and we are all involved.” Expectations are maintained primarily through conversations and documentation when necessary. Regular professional development sessions are held for all staff. Reflections about best practices and strategies are discussed for possible implementation in their practice. For example, a professional learning session on Election Day, focused on learning a Cognitive Demand Analysis Tool as well as the development of effective progress reports. Additional training was provided for teachers using the 3-Read approach in math and language comprehension including how to engage students in making sense of a problem before they approach the solution.
- Monthly progress reports are shared with families regarding their child’s academic performance levels. The report includes a rubric value rating of 1-4 in reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and magnet study. Additionally, academic and personal behaviors are indicated using the same rating and includes assessment of a student’s effort and time management. Parents are expected to sign and return the progress report.
- Report cards are provided to families using the Department of Education template with performance levels rated as 1-4 along with teacher comments. Teacher comments are written in terms of what the student is able to do and when necessary, addresses the areas where further support is needed to ensure that goals will be achieved.
- Parents felt the school is doing a good job of informing the students about junior high school. A planned visitation to the local junior high school is provided for all students to better understand what the next levels’ experience will be like.
- The school’s mission is to foster students’ self-confidence and those abilities essential to develop their academic and social skills, by providing them with programs implemented by highly skilled, nurturing professionals dedicated to excellence in education. The school leaders shared that the goal is to educate the whole child in a culture of peace.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

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

Impact

Limited feedback to students is provided regarding student achievement so that teachers make inconsistent adjustments to their instruction to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics are used with some assignments, although they vary significantly in their development. Some include appropriately categorized ratings and fields, while others lack categories and have misaligned criteria. For example, a rubric used by students to develop an essay had a four point rating scale including categories for organization, elements of how-to-write, conventions, and using transitions. In several other rubrics, the categories were listed together under each performance level, such that a student could not score a level one in one category and a level four in another. However, a student could achieve a level four with having only one or two of the components correct due to the rubric's design.
- Some teachers collect assessment data for students using student observation checklists and/or conferences notes. A grade 5 teacher recorded individual glows and grows for each student as they wrote a compare and contrast essay. Feedback recorded to students included comments such as great details, compared and contrast ideas clearly, take time to proof read and edit to prevent errors. A kindergarten student observation sheet for a math lesson revealed a list of names for students who needed support with writing numbers correctly, solving word problems and whether they could count to twenty correctly. Similar detailed formative assessment data was not consistently maintained by a majority of the teachers.
- A review of feedback to students was inconsistent during class instruction as well as on assignment and performance tasks. For example, some sticky note comments on student work samples included; "you were able to identify a fact about each landform, add even more facts next time;" "you used nice details in your writing, try to write your paragraph in paragraph form;" and "you included great reasons in your letter, try to include transition words next time." Other assignments lacked feedback or consisted of simple checks or one-word remarks, thus limiting the student from understanding how to proceed to the next level.
- In some classes students are provided peer revisiting and editing sheets to complete. The form requires students to offer compliments, suggestions, and corrections. Additionally, some students shared they set goals in their classes on Mondays, although a review of the goals vary from general overarching themes such as "improve my writing" to content specific goals based on prior feedback from the teacher such as "work on my 11 times table." Students were not able to articulate why some classes make goals or why the frequency of goal setting was not consistent.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, integrate instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions to build coherence in curricula and academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula promote college and career readiness for all students across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers collaborate together to develop curriculum overview maps for each grade. Maps include core content areas and character development in conjunction with the book of the month. A grade 4 map indicates specific skills for each content area by month, while the grade 5 map refers to the topic. The curriculum overview maps are used to ensure coherence in the design of lesson plans. An interdisciplinary approach to learning exists across grade and subject areas and lessons are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Blueprint for the Arts. Teachers are expected to annotate individual lesson plans so it meets the needs of their students.
- A review of lesson planning documents includes annotations for groups of students to emphasize individual needs. For example, a literacy lesson plan includes, plans for students to revise their poems by adding sensory details in small groups. Groups of students are supported by either the core content teacher or through paraprofessional support. Another lesson planning document, regarding the instruction of models used to compare units of liquid volume, include purposeful planning of groups according to need. Groups were delineated as requiring re-teaching, independent/buddy check groups, and a student group for those who show advanced understanding. Specific differentiation to promote rigorous engagement was identified in several other curriculum planning documents.
- Rigorous habits are embedded in planning documents so students develop deep understanding from a number of perspectives with a focus on content-rich nonfiction. For example, a grade 4 poetry unit consists of students editing their own Earth Day poem following a reflection of three published poems including, *The Eagle* by Lord Alfred Tennyson. In a science plan, students are expected to create their own bar graph using the data they collected from a plant lab exercise. Follow-up questions require students to describe, determine, and support their answers with evidence from the data collected.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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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 through student work products and discussions.

Impact

Instruction is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and instructional shifts, which reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional focus centers on student engagement and visual learning through hands-on and center activities. Students appear engaged in their instruction as evidenced by their participation. For example, in a special education theater class, students sat around a circle and excitingly acted out pulling an imaginary object from a box. Although the direct connection they were asked to imagine and share with the class was not necessarily connected with their book, the students enthusiastically and respectfully supported one another. Similarly, in a math lesson, some students worked with the teacher in the front of the room answering a series of tiered questions using large visual representations of liquid measures while others worked in small groups and explained their results to one another. Following completion of a group's task, an extension activity was made available to ensure students maintained their engagement in the lesson.
- Across classrooms the questioning and tasks varied with a mix of high- and low-levels according to Webb's Depth of Knowledge. Many questions required students to recall and reproduce answers such as; "Are there any words that give you a visualization?" "Could you add some sound to that?" "Why would I bring in sand?" and "What do you think is the next step?" Students also had opportunities to develop their thinking and plan strategically with partners. For example, in a science class the students were to represent their data on a graph they developed using prompts posted on the classroom wall. In another class, students worked on connecting their knowledge of monarch butterfly migration to a series of visually developed 3-D representations of monarch butterflies.
- Small group, as well as, peer collaboration was observed in most classes supporting student discussion and reflection on their learning. For example, during a writing lesson, students shared their written poems with a partner and peer edited. Two girls said they often share papers in this class and provide feedback to their classmates. In an art lesson, students completed their art project in small groups. During a math lesson observed, students worked together to solve their word problems and played content relevant games when they finished. In most classes, students talked with their partners when engaged in a group task, although, they often spoke directly to the teacher when asked questions related to content.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, distributed leadership structures are in place for teachers.

Impact

Inquiry practices have strengthened teacher capacity. Distributive leadership structures allow teachers to have voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers at a third grade inquiry meeting used a tuning protocol to collaborate and make adjustments to their instructional and assessment practices. Through these inquiry discussions, teachers reported they have been able to improve their teaching practice by planning with their colleagues and developing a common sense of how they are meeting the standards. Additionally, teachers noted, curriculum adjustments are made especially as they relate to next steps in preparing students for success on the New York State English Language Arts and math assessment. For example, teachers made sure the practice assessments they administer to their students mirror the format of the state assessments with limiting the answer choices exclusively to a, b, c, and d, rather than six options they usually used.
- Teachers feel the school leaders “hear us” and “support us” in their efforts to determine what will be helpful regarding the choice of instructional programs. They further stated they are encouraged to innovate and share ideas through professional development opportunities. For example, most staff has showcased a TED talk, an online educational and inspirational video resource, they self-selected to share with their colleagues. Additionally, structures have been established for teachers to self-select a colleague with which to engage in an inter-visitation.
- Teacher teams use protocols to discuss and analyze student work and plan instructional adjustments periodically throughout the year. Minutes from a kindergarten and grade 4 inquiry meeting included discussions regarding recommended texts, reading programs, shared best practices, upcoming projects, unit plan revision, mandates, and horizontal alignment. A few discussion highlights included a decision to revisit a particular chapter in math to reinforce a concept as well as the use of exit slips.