



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 120 Carlos Tapia

Elementary School K120

**18 Beaver Street
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Liza Caraballo-Suarez

**Date of review: January 20, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Audrey Madison**

The School Context

P.S. 120 Carlos Tapia is an elementary school with 431 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 16% Black, 80% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 15% English Language Learners and 21% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.7%.

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 <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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	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	Additional Findings	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:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across all classrooms, teaching practices informed by the Danielson *Framework* reflect a school-wide instructional focus for students to engage in questioning and discussion. Student work products and conversations demonstrate high levels of student participation and thinking.

Impact

Students are cognitively engaged through discourse, produce meaningful work products, and own their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders determined the implementation of reciprocal teaching would be their instructional focus this year. Across all observed grades and subjects, students collaborated in groups to meet their rotating responsibilities as predictors, clarifiers, questioners, summarizers, and facilitators based on the strategies of reciprocal teaching. In a math class, question prompts included, “What operations do you think will be involved?”, “What information do you need to solve the problem?”, and “Is there another way to solve this problem?” A reading lesson plan identified the roles as, “discussion directors, character captains, vocabulary enhancers, summarizers, and artistic adventurers,” each with a set of relevant question prompts.
- In a third grade class, students previewed an article about the Athabacans to determine the genre of the text. The predictors in each group asked, “What is your prediction, and what evidence did you use to help you make that prediction?” Group mates discussed, “I think the genre is non-fiction because of all the pictures.”, “I saw real things so I think it is realistic fiction.”, and “I saw animals, a map, people, all living things so that means it’s non-fiction, not realistic fiction.” A questioner posed, “What types of other text features can you see?” Lower grade teachers shared that to introduce the roles of reciprocal teaching, students are taught about characters such as Pattie Predictor and Quincy Questioner. Teachers reported that their kindergartners are demonstrating understanding and application through “I predict...”, “I think”, or “One question I have is...” statements.
- During an observed team meeting, teachers pondered, “How do we measure the impact of reciprocal teaching in isolation?” One teacher shared that she gives students an article to be discussed in their groups, with questions they are to answer individually. Another teacher provides task cards that they fill out based on their roles. Another gives an exit slip focused on finding the main idea.
- In a fourth grade science lesson on erosion, color photo images of landforms were projected on an interactive white board as students referred to the same images within texts and discussed how each landform was created. One student stated, “This is how the canyon caused erosion.” A group mate read, “Consider all of the forces that cause erosion.” The first student corrected, “I mean erosion caused the canyon. I see a river.” A third student added, “Maybe the waves splashed against it.” In another fourth grade class, students worked to solve a task titled the “Erosion Problem” to make equivalent fractions. An effect of departmentalization was evident as two students discovered eroding and erosion are common words and have similar meaning. One of them posed to his teacher, “Are you saying we’re doing the same thing in every class but in a different way?”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

All teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula and consistently use ongoing checks for understanding and student self- and peer-assessment to make instructional adjustments. However, measurement of student mastery does not yet consistently assess for overall grade level performance.

Impact

School-wide assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet the learning needs of all students and students are aware of their next learning steps, yet are not consistently informed regarding performance toward the Common Core grade-level standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Written teacher feedback based on a fourth grade math rubric aligned to the Standards for Mathematical Practice informs, "You showed you know how to multiply and divide well. Next time please try to draw a model to show your thinking." In response the student wrote his next steps, "Next time I will draw a model." Teacher feedback written from a fifth grade argumentative writing rubric, which was aligned to the standards advises, "You provided great support for reason #3. Try to expand all of your paragraphs by including and explaining specific examples." The student replied in writing, "My next steps are to give examples in my writing to make it better."
- While the rubric of a fourth grade student's social studies writing piece was aligned to the persuasive essay task, it did not include components of the Common Core written opinion standard. The teacher feedback stated, "That's a ton of information and ideas. Edit your work and use punctuation to make it easier to read. With punctuation- 4, Without punctuation- 3." A first grade student's persuasive letter, required an opinion, supporting reasons, and the use of capital letters and ending punctuation marks, according to the criteria of the rubric. The work was scored Level 3, with teacher feedback focused on periods at the end of all sentences, yet did not address a missing opinion. A fifth grade task required students to write a persuasive essay explaining why learning about rocks is important. While the rubric was aligned to the task, the rubric lacked components for the fifth grade opinion piece. One student received a score of 4, with feedback, which stated, "Your writing was very organized and very clearly thought out. Be careful with word choice." It was unclear if the student met or exceeded grade level performance based on the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Teachers were observed using checklists to assess individual and group work, conferencing with students, taking notes on student verbal responses and the strategies they used. Exit slips such as, "Write one thing you learned from the *Time for Kids* article about hibernation.", or "Complete the graphic organizer to show you can determine the main idea and recount the key details by using text features." were evident.
- Students maintain goal binders with actions they will take and target dates for mastery of goals. One student marks each day with an "x" or a check. Samples of varied student goals included, "Accurately use tier 2 and tier 3 words in my writing and speaking; go back to the passage to find evidence from the text to prove my answers; to learn equivalent fractions."

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty strategically integrate the instructional shifts, and ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, while emphasizing higher-order skills coherently across grades and subjects.

Impact

There is coherence in curricula across grades and subject areas so that all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, demonstrate their thinking in tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders stated modifications were made to the curricula to better align to the Common Core. Decisions were made to incorporate the *Teachers College* writing units, yet rearrange topics so as to teach opinion writing earlier and develop persuasion writing afterward. *Go Math!* units were re-sequenced to address major standards sooner in the year, such as fractions in third grade. *Words Their Way* and *Foundations* programs were added to the curricula to address the need for focused word study in the lower grades. Curricula documents identified supplemental resources as well.
- An essential question from the kindergarten unit plan posed, “How can writers express their opinion about a topic through writing, dictating, and drawing?” A third grade reading lesson plan demonstrated alignment to the school’s standards-based curricula with an essential question, “How can readers determine the main idea and recount the key details by using text features?” A fourth grade math lesson plan indicated the expectation that students provide answers to the essential question, “How can you use multiplication to find equivalent fractions?” before they engaged in a reciprocal teaching problem solving activity. A fourth grade science lesson plan, presented the probing question, “How do natural events affect our world?” Given the essential question, “How do key events shape a nation?”, a fifth grade unit plan required students to conduct research for expository writing, based on interest, selecting from topics of geography and landscape, government, culture and celebrations, noteworthy people, and food.
- A range of learning objectives and activities were evident in lesson plans. In a third grade reading lesson, the objective was for students to analyze how characters’ actions affect the sequence of events of a narrative. A fifth grade lesson plan stated that students would turn and talk to respond to the prompt, “The text refers to Hudson, ‘pushing through the strait.’ Based on page five and the map on pages six and seven, what do you think strait means?” A first grade lesson plan asked students to use text evidence and picture clues to determine how characters might feel if they had more days of school. A fourth grade science activity required students to “examine rock specimens and make hypotheses about how each rock may have eroded from a larger rock,” and “provide support for each hypothesis.”
- A collaborative lesson plan from teachers of first grade and English as a New Language (ENL) evidenced a language objective for English Language Learners and students with disabilities, “Respond verbally with information, ideas, and concepts to show comprehension of selected text through reading and discussion.”

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and support student progress toward those expectations.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability has been established and the school successfully partners with families to further enhance student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School documents confirm that staff developers were hired to cultivate staff competencies to support implementation of their instructional focus in reciprocal teaching and guided reading for English Language Arts and math. Teacher goal sheets provide evidence that teachers aspire toward professional growth and determine action steps toward achievement of goals. For example, one teacher indicated his intent to model effective reciprocal learning strategies and provide students opportunities to use them during problem solving activities. His midyear teacher reflection indicated that he has made adjustments to his instructional practice by attending consultant-provided sessions and that he has led professional development on reciprocal teaching in math at the school level.
- School leaders provide frequent feedback to teachers to ensure accountability and further enhance effective teacher practice as evidenced in written observation forms. Teachers who have been rated effective in questioning and discussion are given detailed feedback to support growth to highly effective pedagogy. One teacher rated highly effective in this area, was offered next steps to, “incorporate additional sentence starters for English Language Learners to encourage them to participate more in group discussion.”
- Agendas and minutes show that approximately ninety family participants have engaged in seven workshops on reciprocal teaching presented by the parent coordinator over two months during parent book clubs, parent coordinator meetings, and parent teacher association meetings. Minutes from a School Leadership Team meeting revealed that parents requested to see reciprocal teaching methods in action. Agendas for fourth and fifth grade parents reflect that parents were informed of departmentalization, as well as reciprocal teaching during curriculum night.
- Interviewed parents stated that they attend school-sponsored book clubs, engaging with different children’s books each Friday. One Spanish speaking parent was particularly pleased about bilingual books because she had not been able to read with her children in the past and said that the book club helps her learn English and help her daughter read more. Class newsletters are provided in English and Spanish, and suggest hints to support learning. For example, a pre-k newsletter offered, “To support students learning about land, air and water vehicles, parents can take a trip with their child on the Staten Island Ferry.” A third grade newsletter explained the difference between opinion and informational writing. Parents expressed they are further informed through student led conferences, progress reports, and open communication.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership structures are embedded across the school.

Impact

School-wide instructional coherence promotes increased student achievement for all learners as teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that, “departmentalization was the decision of the teachers. After piloting that structure with the fifth grade team last year, the teachers wanted to implement it in the fourth grade, also, this year.” Involved teachers stated that departmentalizing has helped them to integrate themes across subject areas. One teacher shared that knowledge of a subject gained through reading has helped students better understand science and social studies, and vice versa, adding that this was most evident in student writing. Teachers explained the effects of common planning stating that, “Students learn the structure for writing opinion pieces and apply that to content knowledge from science and social studies to write more coherently.”
- At an observed cross-grade inquiry team meeting, teachers reported on their second cycle focus, cycle grade findings, as well as their decisions for next steps. For example, a teacher conveyed that for the second grade inquiry focus on using sight words to enhance decoding, that some inquiry students had improved two levels, and that one student showed three levels of growth, and that cycle three would move into comprehension and continued application of reciprocal teaching. The fourth and fifth grade inquiry strategy was to have students read multiple-choice questions before reading text. The team representative stated, that while students increased their scores in running records that not much improvement was noted as yet with multiple-choice questions. The teacher stated that feedback from students indicated that some passages were lengthy and that students often ran out of time, so they were not always able to read the questions first. Team minutes also reflected strategies such as using the Frayer model and tiered words to address academic vocabulary across grades.
- As evidenced by agendas and teachers’ notes, teacher representatives across grades collaborated with the instructional cabinet to conduct learning walk-throughs focused on questioning and discussion techniques in preparation for professional development in the fall. Teachers recorded their noticings and wonderings and debriefed with the use of the Danielson rubric. Two fifth grade teachers from the instructional cabinet team then provided professional development on reciprocal teaching and academic vocabulary. School documents indicate a teacher and an assistant principal attended workshops on reciprocal teaching in mathematics and provided professional development to colleagues as evidenced by agendas and workshop materials. The speech and language teacher shared that she offered a workshop session on the needs of English Language Learners as compared to needs of speech and language impaired students, because the principal gave her the opportunity to provide support based on issues she had noticed.