



# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**P.S. 123 Suydam**

**Elementary School K123**

**100 Irving Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11237**

**Principal: Arelis Parache**

**Date of review: March 9, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Audrey Madison**

## The School Context

P.S. 123 Suydam is an elementary school with 740 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 4% Black, 90% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 28% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.5%.

## 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	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	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	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

### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations, ensure training is provided for all staff, and effectively collaborate with families to support their children's progress.

### Impact

School leaders and staff are mutually responsible for attaining high expectations for themselves and students. Parents successfully partner with the school and actively support their children to further enhance academic achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal's weekly newsletter is one method used to communicate expectations to all staff. Photographs document the school's instructional focus on student engagement in learning within student-centered classrooms, displaying students in action as they explain their answers, work in groups, and engage in presentations. Additionally, each issue offers instructional reminders to promote components of the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. One entry clarified classroom implementation for instruction that is coherently designed, while another item made explicit the connections between using assessment in instruction and working with students to set goals.
- The professional development (PD) plan reflects alignment to the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* components and also identifies the rationale for a range of whole staff training offered each month. For example, last year's spring data for English Language Arts (ELA) prompted a focus on close reading strategies, training in Kagan cooperative learning strategies, and inter-visitation to another school to observe a reading lesson using close reading methodology. A fourth grade teacher then provided a workshop to colleagues on close reading strategies. School leaders offered training in strategic conferencing to support the expectation that teachers fully integrate assessment into instruction. Teacher reflection sheets indicate that teachers have implemented strategic conferencing, setting goals with students and using results of conferencing to group students according to their instructional needs.
- Interviewed parents shared that they regularly attend monthly family celebrations and have seen their child present a book report, demonstrate understanding of greater and less than, put on a puppet show, or exhibit their mini-book written for Author Day. Also, parents shared that they work with their children on academic websites, such as Raz-kids, Mathletics, and Starfall. School documents reflect significant numbers of parents have attended workshops such as, "Math Strategies for Multiplication," "Building your Child's Vocabulary," and "Strategies and Homework to Prepare for the State Exams." Approximately 50 parents regularly attend the daily adult English as a Second Language classes and 30 to 40 parents regularly attend quarterly "Coffee with the Principal" sessions, held to keep parents abreast of home-school connections.
- Parents affirm that they receive academic progress reports, offered between marking periods, in English and Spanish, which convey how their child is doing regarding grade-level standards and expectations. Teachers include comments in these reports about students' strengths, areas for improvement, and suggestions for how families can help.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals. While teachers use rubrics and grading policies that are aligned to the school's curricula and inform next steps, that feedback is not consistently specific.

### Impact

Assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction. Feedback, while actionable, is not always meaningful, resulting in missed opportunities for accurately assessing student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Classroom teachers maintain data regarding base-line, mid-year, and eventually end-year Common Core-aligned writing assessments that evaluate performance for each student. For example, a fifth grade teacher's charted data teacher reflects both individual student and overall class progress. From base-line to mid-year, students scoring on Level 1 decreased from six students to one student, and students scoring at Level 3 increased from three students to eleven students. School leaders track and report progress across each grade. Baseline data charts for grade 1 documented that 72% of students were below grade level and 28% students were approaching grade level as compared to mid-year data which showed that 26% of students were below grade level, 42% approaching grade level, 31% at grade level, and 1% above grade level.
- A review of last year's school-wide ELA assessment data surfaced the need to focus on writing. The principal explained that professional development and supplemental writing programs were employed to support improved instruction. Teachers incorporated specific writing strategies based on the Hochman Method and Portland Writing utilizing writing models for different genres, outline templates, and graphic organizers. Another instructional adjustment across the school was to explicitly teach students how to look for and use evidence from text in their writing.
- Writing portfolio coversheets track each genre of writing, specific tasks completed, rubric scores, and teacher comments. One fourth grade student received rubric scores of Level 3 on two narrative tasks and two informative writing tasks. However, teacher comments for each task all focused on transitional words. Teacher comments were not written on examined third and fifth grade writing portfolio coversheets.
- On base-line assessments for grade-level informational and explanatory writing tasks, both a first grader and a fifth grader received an overall score of Level 2 for approaching grade level. Component parts of the Common Core standard, were checked off on the rubric attached to the first grader's work. However, the fifth grade student's rubric had a circled Level 2 with no additional information checked off or highlighted. Similar findings were evident for mid-year assessments and rubrics attached to other student work products.
- Teachers consistently provide feedback in the form of "glows and grows" on student work. Students explained their next steps based on that feedback, "Explain more means that I need to add more details." and "Needs organization means I need to group my ideas."

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Curricula and academic tasks for all students are planned and refined using student work and data and consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Diverse learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are cognitively engaged and have access to rigorous curricula and tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- Through analysis of student work teachers noticed that students performed better through the use of scaffolds and varied visuals. Teachers have adjusted curricula documents to include student engagement resources such as *Go Math!* real-world videos and web-based resources and have identified supports for English Language Learners (ELLs) such as teacher-created charts for problem solving, prompts to encourage justification and explanation, and teacher-created reference sheets with vocabulary. Unit plans identify tiered formative assessment tasks and multiple entry points for all students, including ELLs and special education students, through the use of fraction bars and circles, decimal grids, presentation of same materials visually and kinesthetically, and tiered response to intervention strategies.
- An essential question from a kindergarten ELA unit plan poses, “Why are farms important to us?” Fourth graders ponder, “How are fractions and decimals related and how are they different?” In fifth grade, “How do scientists communicate what they learn about the natural world?” and “What is unique about living things in the rainforest?” are some of the essential questions in an ELA unit.
- Lesson plans reflect student-friendly learning targets, which are posed as “We can” statements. Kindergarten students show, count, and write numbers to 20 and beyond. Fourth graders multiply by eight and nine using different strategies, interpret products of whole numbers, and use multiplication and division within 100 to solve word problems. In Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes, third grade students compare and contrast texts. While one group of fifth graders annotate sections of a text to identify key ideas and details, another group in that class reads the text and discusses the gist. Third graders in a dual language class write a book review and recommend a favorite book. Second graders explain the water cycle and why it is important to our planet.
- Lesson plans also reveal student grouping based on reading levels, grade performance levels and differentiated needs for prompting and support. Student performance on unit and benchmark assessments led to change of groupings for some students as evidenced in a third grade lesson plan for students in an ICT class. The plan reflected items for re-teaching, and differentiated Depth of Knowledge questions and tasks for on-level and enrichment groups. Additional strategies and layers of questioning were added to the lesson plan for a fifth grade self-contained special education class.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### **Impact**

All learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, and produce meaningful work products.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Visits to third and fifth grade ICT classes evidenced the process of station teaching. A third grade co-teacher facilitated a math lesson as students used one-inch graph paper, wipe-off graph paper and color tiles to draw, construct, and compare perimeters of rectangles with the same area. The teacher asked students to turn and talk asking, "What did you find out about perimeters?" One student told his partner, "Rectangles with the same area have same perimeter." His partner responded, "I disagree. The perimeter is not always the same because sometimes the shape is longer and has a bigger perimeter." The teacher required students to share out their partner's response. The other co-teacher taught an ELA writing lesson, modeling the use of sentence stems and a graphic organizer to compare and contrast ideas from two texts. Students then worked independently to use those supports as well as picture cards to describe and write about the similarities and differences. Simultaneously, several individual students worked independently accessing the Mathletics website on laptops to solve word problems, while at another independent group station, students collaborated to compare and contrast two text passages.
- Kindergarten students in a 12:1:1 class worked at math centers, facilitated by the teacher and paraprofessionals, to show, count, and write numbers to 20 and beyond. Center activities included: find missing numbers, count and find matching numbers, trace numbers, determine which number comes next, determine if numbers are in the correct numerical order, and decide if a number is greater than another number.
- After a mini-lesson, students in a fifth grade class worked on differentiated tasks to multiply mixed numbers to solve word problems. The teacher led one group to model mixed numbers and change the models to make fractions greater than one, reminding students to use academic language. Facilitation from a paraprofessional in a grade 3/4 12:1:1 class included, "Tell him why you think it is paragraph eleven. Do you agree or disagree, explain why using details from the text?"
- In a fourth grade class for English Language Learners, one group used evidence from the text to explain why Hooverball was a good activity. Another group determined what details in an article showed that the author researched the topic of Hooverballs, citing text examples that made the information seem trustworthy. One other group described a problem President Hoover had and how he solved it. Fourth graders in a 12:1:1 class also read the Hoover article and discussed text details to support understanding of the author's use of the phrases such as "rain or shine". In another class, a dual language fourth grader helped his peer write an explanation of how they determined the answer to a math problem, which required them to figure out, "Did she run at least six miles?" Both students persisted in dialogue to ensure that the written explanation was correct and accurate.

<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

Teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations and systematically analyze key elements of teacher work, including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for the students on whom they are focused.

### Impact

Professional collaborations have fostered school-wide instructional coherence promoting increased student achievement for all learners, shared improvements in teacher practice, and mastery of goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Minutes of the first grade teacher team reveal their goal for 50 students in the lowest third to advance to approaching grade-level performance through increased sight word acquisition. Action plans identified strategies such as small group instruction with the teacher at least twice per week, and scheduling Response to Intervention (RTI) time for students to work in sight word centers. Sixty-five percent of targeted students met the mid-point check-in, improving their sight word bank by an additional twenty-five sight words. Teachers read articles and explored websites to add to their instructional toolbox and made adjustments by adding various games to learning sessions. At the end of the six-week cycle, analysis of pre- and post- results, indicate progress was made by every student, with 90% of targeted students meeting the benchmark for this phase of inquiry. Interviewed kindergarten and first grade teachers express that sharing strategies and collaboration to find best ways to get results has meant, “No one feels left to figure things out in isolation.”
- During an observed fifth grade team meeting, teachers engaged in analysis of Common Core-aligned multiple choice assessment questions that students had answered incorrectly, offering possible reasons why students would have difficulty. Teachers identified concerns such as going back to specific paragraphs to answer questions and finding the common theme of two texts as areas to incorporate into explicit teaching. Two team members presented a packet of strategies and graphic organizers for use to strengthen fifth grade Common Core literature standards, which would also be shared on Google Drive.
- Third grade teachers chose “writing extended responses through the use of comparing and contrasting paired passages” as their focus for their third inquiry cycle. Analysis of student work helped teachers to conclude that answer stems and the use of compare and contrast key words helped targeted students to improve their writing and meet standards. Teachers noted that students now use phrases such as, “according to the text”, “one thing these \_\_\_ have in common”, “they both have”, and “is also different because”.
- Kindergarten teachers identified instructional reading benchmarks for students on letter and sound recognition, high frequency words, and reading levels expected at the end of assessment periods in September/October, March, and May. Expectations are higher as the year progress. For example, students were on benchmark level for assessment period one if they were able to recognize 40 or more upper/lower case letters, while by the end of period two, students are expected to know 52 letters, 26 sounds, and 25 sight words and to read on level C to be on benchmark level.