



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. K140

Elementary – Middle School K140

**141 Macon Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216**

Principal: Roderick Palton

**Date of review: January 13-14, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

The School Context

P.S. K140 is an elementary – middle school with 255 students from grade Kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 67% Black, 26% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 13% English Language Learners and 100% students with disabilities. Boys account for 82% of the students enrolled and girls account for 18%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 85.0%.

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	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 the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students and provide clear, focused, and effective feedback and guidance.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability that ensures all students own their educational experience and are prepared for their individual and appropriate next level.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team meetings several teachers stated that the principal sets clear expectations for teaching and learning through an explicit school-wide instructional focus on Specially Designed Instruction (SDI). Using electronic newsletters, weekly email notifications, and professional development sessions, school leaders provide all staff with information and supports, identifying learning targets and expectations. Teachers reported that they are held accountable for delivering high quality instruction incorporating Universal Design for Learning guidelines and principles to the use of academic vocabulary and high level discussions.
- All teachers receive ongoing professional development from school-based staff and consultants, including teacher leaders, assistant principals, and principal based on an analysis of the staff's learning needs as well as the identified learning needs of all students whom they teach. Utilizing classroom observation data, school leaders work one to one with teachers to evaluate their progress based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching and help unearth patterns of growth or decline in student achievement. Teachers receive training in specially designed instruction to address the unique learning needs of their students and ensure their alternate assessed and standardized students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum. Observation reports show that school leaders provide specific, timely and actionable feedback addressing in specific, student engagement and questioning and discussion strategies. Both teachers and school leaders reported improvement in teacher practice and student achievement as a result of these activities.
- Given the diverse needs of the school's students, all are provided with supports to meet their needs. Grade 8 students are part of the planning process for the commencement ceremony to high school. High school options include attending a community school or a District 75 school. Students reported that they are aware of what is needed both academically and behaviorally in order to be successful in a setting with their general education peers and their teachers consistently support them in meeting these goals. The school has two elementary inclusion programs within district community schools, and has also opened a new class within a district community school that promotes inclusion for their alternate assessed learners. Students engage in discussion about career and college via two Career and Technology teachers. Additionally, students have quarterly check-in meetings to promote student awareness of their progress to the next grade, setting, or school level.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

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. Teaching strategies including questioning and scaffolds consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products. However, the levels of questioning and extensions into the curricula vary so that not all learners are able to engage in appropriately challenging tasks where they can demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Following the principles of Specially Designed Instruction, teachers encourage students to engage in evidence in argument, productive struggle, and using assessing and advancing questions during classroom instruction. In a math class focused on measurement, the learning target was solving addition and subtraction word problems involving metric length by understanding meter and centimeter number bonds. Students were placed in one of three groups in which the activities and level of teacher and paraprofessional support that led into the lesson objective varied. In a bridge class, students were expected to classify shapes when given the attribute while also name the survival signs associated with the identified shape. Students were placed in lower, middle, and higher level learner groups. The level 3 learners were given a worksheet with four picture choices and they had to identify the shape with a specific number of sides while also writing the names of the shape and the survival sign associated with the shape.
- The use of extensions of tasks to deepen student engagement was evident in some classrooms, including an English Language Arts class where the teacher engaged the students in distinguishing between fact and opinion while learning about Japan's climate. The teacher worked on differentiated tasks with the most struggling learners in small groups across the room while students in the middle and higher-level groups worked with peers on self-selected problems. Conversely, in a grade 8 literacy class the levels of questioning remained at one level including the following questions, "What does taking a stand mean?", "Why is this important?", and "How many years ago was 1969?" The class spent more time engaged in a math lesson while trying to subtract the years in between 2016 and 1969 than on the lesson's essential question, "How does taking a stand in small ways show integrity?"
- In classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students at varied levels. In an early grade classroom for students who are alternately assessed, the teacher used an interactive white board, pictures, words, and symbols to engage students however, in another classroom focused on a similar lesson objective with students at similar academic levels, with an interactive white board, the teacher did not utilize technology throughout the lesson and some students were off task and disengaged.

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 the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions to build coherence. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Students have access to curricula and tasks that are cognitively engaging and promotes college and career readiness for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers meet on a weekly basis to discuss and make curricular adjustments. The school uses Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula that they modify as appropriate for their population who are all students with disabilities. Additionally, the Alternate Assessment Curricula is used for students who are alternately assessed. Being that most of the classes are bridged, teachers plan instruction that focuses on anchor standards and design tasks for the various levels in some content areas. For example, in an English Language Arts grades 7-8 module on citing evidence, accommodations and grouping were included. However, in a Social Studies grade 3 unit map on Communities Around the World, groupings and access levels were not evident.
- Teachers adapted and revised pacing calendars that outline academic expectations for each unit and performance tasks are created by teacher teams and vetted by the leadership team and teacher grade leaders. Teachers were spending too much time on topics which did not produce increased student outcomes and wanted to create more coherence across grades, specifically for the students taking standardized assessments which is approximately fifty percent of the population. For example, in grade 6, ratios are a big focus of the curricula and teachers decided to begin incorporating student interests into the unit in order to make the material relevant and interesting for students.
- Driven by a school-wide instructional focus on academic rigor and productive struggle, teachers and school leadership decided to use Expeditionary Learning in grades 3-8 for English Language Arts and Eureka Math for their standardized tested students. The school previously used Every Day math however teachers believed their students needed access to more rigorous curricula. As reported by the principal and teachers, Expeditionary Learning fits into the school's vision for exposing children to rigorous instruction.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement resulting in all students demonstrating increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- In all content areas, there are pre-and post-unit assessments from which teachers cull data and make adjustments to instruction to improve student performance. Assessment practices also include the use of rubrics aligned to curricula and tasks to evaluate and provide feedback on students' performance. A common grading policy drives conversations amongst staff and students during teacher-student conferences.
- Using a variety of tracking tools and charts, teachers outline students' strengths and needs by grade levels, skills, standards and content areas for both student groups, alternately assessed and standardized. A math periodic assessment baseline tracker identified students with skills one grade level below their current grade level in grades 3-8. Using the SANDI-FAST complexity levels data assessment revealed the school selects, on average, reading level tasks that are higher than other District 75 schools. Work folders maintained by each student also contain logs with goals set for the student, tracking of the student's progress from one assessment to the next, and copies of assessments showing scores and teacher comments about the student's strengths and areas of need. Work samples displayed by students showed teachers' use of task-specific rubrics to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines. A work sample in a grade 8 student's folder showed feedback via a rating of Level 3 on an attached four point rubric for math problem solving, with a next step advising the student to "use more than one model to prove the solution."
- Students across grades and ability levels reported that feedback and rubrics helps them to focus on what they need to work on to improve in both their academics and behavior. Students utilize their report cards, Individualized Education Plan goals, and conferences with teachers to assist them with progressing.
- The school uses the New York State Alternate Assessment Movement in Performance Level to track their student's and have outperformed the district in the percentage of students earning levels 3 and 4 in English Language Arts (ELA). Students are provided with daily tracking sheets in math and ELA that includes an objective, target accuracy, comments on next steps, and they are rated on a level one (Novice) to a level four (expert).

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, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the CCLS. 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

Shared improvements in teacher practice has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, increased student achievement for all learners, and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams are grouped based on grade bands as well as alternate assessment teams and standardized teams. Teams meet every week and are programmed by their common preps. During their weekly meetings teachers use the looking at student thinking protocol to guide their inquiry work which focuses on how teaching strategies can be improved around question and discussion and how are scaffolds being included as appropriate for students. Teachers reported that they've seen tremendous improvement in some of their alternate assessed grade 4 students who were non-readers at the beginning of the school year and are now reading at level A because teachers were able to identify target need areas and adjust the curricula to meet students where they are performing. Both non-verbal and verbal students have also made improvement in writing because teachers revised the structure of essays and included sentence starters and graphic organizers to increase access for all students.
- During the Quality Review, a Collaborative Team Teacher team analyzed a writing sample of a student with occupational therapy challenges who had recently transitioned to an inclusion setting. The student had difficulty using his graphic organizer to support his organization and how to form and space his writing. The team realized the paper he used in different content areas was not consistent and that the student felt singled out because he was the only student in the class using this paper and as a student with a disability in a new setting with his general education peers, this was negatively impacting his academic performance. The team decided to provide him with paper that supported his occupational therapy issues in all classes and a new graphic organizer that other students in the class would benefit from as well by using The Hamburger Method.
- A review of teacher team meeting agendas and minutes included protocols, instructional foci for the year for writing, reading, and math. In addition, teachers discuss how to utilize paraprofessionals when teaching students sight words and different writing techniques, which are, outlined in student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals. From this meeting, teachers decided to focus on creating a uniform IEP tracking sheet which gave teachers, paraprofessionals, and students a clearer picture of how to monitor student improvement in a more effective and efficient way.