



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 149 Danny Kaye

Elementary School K149

**700 Sutter Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Yvette Donald

**Date of review: November 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

P.S. 149 Danny Kaye is an elementary school with 729 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016 the school population comprises 3% Asian, 63% Black, 33% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 13% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.1%.

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	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	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teams of teachers meet regularly to systematically analyze their instructional practices and develop strategies to improve staff and student achievement. Distributive leadership structures facilitate teacher collaboration with school leaders to make critical decisions about teaching and learning across the school.

Impact

Through embedded systems and structures for teamwork, all teachers regularly reflect on and improve their pedagogy. Distributed leadership results in the implementation of structures and systems impacting student progress towards learning goals and deepening of teacher capacity to deliver high quality instruction to all students.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers have at least two preparation periods per week for activities with peers on teams, including grade level teams and cluster teams. Teachers are also programmed for a weekly common planning period that allows them to meet regularly with teachers of students with disabilities and gifted and talented students. Staff engages in collaborative inquiry to norm ratings of student work and to further align units of study with specific foci on close reading of complex texts, academic vocabulary, and rigorous tasks for all students. The principal and teachers noted that teamwork has improved teacher pedagogy, as per overall data from the Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) score. In addition, teamwork has contributed to shared approaches in working with students, yielding improvement in student achievement schoolwide, as per data from running records.
- Teacher team activities reflect shared practices as teachers discuss observations about students and identify strategies for adjusting instruction as needed to accelerate student mastery of Common Core Learning Standards. During the Quality Review, members of a grade 4 teacher team used a rubric for opinion writing to examine samples of student work at two levels of proficiency, (high and low), based on the students' responses to a writing performance task. The presenting teacher asked peers to suggest strategies for improving elements of the writing, including organization, elaboration, use of transitions, and the citing of evidence from the text. Peers offered suggestions such as adding a graphic organizer with sentence starters and incorporating a mentor text to support the students towards mastery of the targeted skills. A lead presenter guided the conversation and a recorder documented all meeting activities.
- During one team meeting teachers stated that they are heavily involved in high-level decisions with administrators, who participate in team meetings as thought partners and are open to ideas presented by teachers. Teacher leaders, including grade leaders, data specialists, and a literacy coach, work directly with other teachers in implementing school wide protocols and developing curricula and instructional initiatives. In addition to leading grade and department teams, teacher leaders collaborate with school leaders on academic priorities and professional development plans. On Fridays, members of a vertical team meet with administrators to discuss current needs and present reports on team meetings. The principal noted that members of this team are integral to the selection of Common Core-aligned instructional materials and resources.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While lessons demonstrate applications of multiple entry points and provide students, across grades and content areas, with opportunities to engage in group work and text-based discussions, extensions of tasks for all learners were not evident across classrooms.

Impact

Although students participate in discussions and produce high quality work products across grades and content areas, there are missed opportunities to further deepen thinking and foster ownership of learning by all students, especially advanced learners.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 3 math class, the teacher engaged small groups of students in brainstorming steps for problem solving. For each group, the teacher distributed a task sheet with a problem, highlighters, and chart paper, for the group to use in identifying key words indicating math operations to be completed to derive a correct response. A group leader facilitated discussion as students used math academic vocabulary to question each other's thinking about the steps required for successful completion of the task. A similar approach was evident in a grade 4 social studies class where, based on a reading of a text and focus questions, students worked with peers in small groups to examine differences in the lives and responsibilities of male versus female Iroquois children. The high level of peer-to-peer discussion evidenced in these classes was not noted in a few other classrooms, including a grade 5 math class for students with disabilities, where the lesson was teacher centered, with only a few students answering questions directed to them by the teacher.
- Across classrooms teachers used a variety of techniques such as questioning, hands-on activities and small group work, to engage students in tasks that promoted higher-order thinking. In a grade 5 English Language Arts class, the teacher challenged students to formulate thesis statements and cite textual evidence to support several reasons for their thesis, based on their reading of *Nasreen's Secret School*. The students used post-its to flag ideas on pages of the reading selection and wrote the thesis statement, reasons and related evidence on a graphic organizer. They shared ideas with partners who offered feedback on their points of view and then shared with the entire class. In other classes visited, learning tasks did not routinely offer students, especially advanced learners, similar opportunities to take ownership of learning by offering them opportunities to extend the learned concept.
- In the classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for all students to be immersed in learning tasks. Teachers worked with small guided groups and some teachers circulated amongst students, monitoring their work as they completed independent tasks. In a grade 2 English Language Arts class, students used a narrative writing checklist and referred to an anchor chart about stages of the writing process in editing their work, after viewing a mini-lesson about using elaboration, transition words, and leads to create "small moments in writing". Students worked independently, making revisions to their drafts, which illustrated their prior work on the same task. Similarly, in a grade 1 class, the teacher used modeling to engage all students in clapping, rapping, smiling, and spinning, as they all danced to beats of recorded music.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and illustrate strategic integration of instructional shifts. Teachers constantly collaborate to refine curricula and tasks to provide increasingly more demanding curricula for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

A school-wide commitment to continuously deepening alignment of curricula to relevant standards results in coherently sequenced Common Core-aligned units of study, with rigorous academic tasks designed to deepen thinking and accelerate learning by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- All units of study reflect alignment to Common Core Standards and instructional shifts and highlight topics, focus questions, essential understandings, assessments, target vocabulary, and sample tasks for guided and independent practice. Modules sequenced by topics and grades provide teachers with content from *ReadyGen*, supplemented by *Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project* curricula, to infuse literacy based tasks in interdisciplinary units of curricula. Math curricula include the Common Core-aligned *GO Math!* program and units of study linked to teachers' use of *EngageNY* resources for additional focus on instructional shifts in math. Pacing calendars, aligned to the New York State and City scope and sequence, guide instruction in social studies and science, with applications of concepts from *Physical Best* curricula serving as resources for project-based tasks.
- Driven by a current school-wide instructional focus on writing across content areas and reading for main idea and details, teachers create curriculum maps and unit plans that illustrate tasks designed for both enrichment and acceleration by students in all subgroups, across diverse ability levels. For all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, the use of visuals, sentence frames, manipulatives, and technology-based supports, including laptops and SMARTboards, are embedded in lesson plans and units. Units also show that teachers front-load tiered vocabulary and connect skills and unit goals to learning tasks that support oral language acquisition. Each unit includes a culminating performance task and a Common Core-aligned rubric for assessing levels of student mastery of content and skills. The principal noted that the school's 2015 data showing improved schoolwide performance in English Language Arts is an outgrowth of curricula designed with strategies and tasks to push students' thinking.
- Unit maps, lesson plans, and student work, reflect academic tasks that are threaded through themes linked to complex texts. There are tasks that require students to engage in close reading of the texts, complete essays that involve making a claim and supporting the claim with text based evidence, and prepare summaries of reading selections about a variety of topics across content areas and grades. There are also projects requiring students to delve deeply into academic vocabulary in producing informational essays and describing math problem solving or science inquiry steps. In addition to units of instruction for day-to-day core content, curricula include topics and skills related to college and career readiness, with inquiry based independent learning projects and enrichment activities embedded in units. Curricula for technology instruction, art, and music provide students with additional exposure to college and career readiness activities.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teachers use multiple assessment tools and practices, aligned to curricula, to provide actionable feedback on student performance and for engaging students in self- and peer-assessment. Data from multiple sources inform adjustments to curricula and instruction to address students' learning needs.

Impact

Across classrooms, assessment practices promote the sharing of feedback that supports students in improving their work and builds teacher and student capacity to make adjustments that target students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal's assessment binder indicates that Fountas and Pinnell Running Records are administered to all students at designated periods throughout the year. Beginning- and end-of-unit assessments in reading and writing linked to *ReadyGen* curricula are also administered and technology-linked assessments in reading and math provide additional data about levels of student achievement. *GO Math!* embedded assessments allow for the use of interactive Common Core-aligned end-of-unit assessments with online components that provide students with additional math problems to practice problem solving at home or in class, until they master a targeted skill or concept. This assessment tool provides feedback via in-depth reports about which concepts need to be reviewed and which show student mastery. Formal assessments in science for upper grade students are pending and will address learning needs evident in the results of the 2015 New York State Science assessment.
- Teachers adopt and create Common Core-aligned rubrics, checklists and a school-wide grading policy, aligned to the curricula, to provide feedback on students' performance on tasks. An "Opinion/Narrative/Informational Writing Rubric" is used to evaluate progress in students' writing across grades and there are several task specific rubrics attached to units of instruction to measure levels of skills and content acquisition across disciplines. Although some feedback seen on students' work consisted of the teacher only circling portions of the rubric, most classroom bulletin boards with student work showed rubric-based feedback to students, via teachers' comments with next steps for students to improve their work. Further, while a few of the students interviewed were not able to clearly specify what they needed to do to improve their work based on the feedback noted on the work that they displayed, all students at the interview stated that they work with rubrics and/or checklists in class and at home.
- Teachers use tools such as white boards, exit slips, stop and jot, and thumbs-up or thumbs-down, to monitor students' understanding of lesson objectives and tasks. A review of student work revealed that most students use checklist and rubrics to self-assess. In commenting on performance on a narrative unit task, one student noted, "I did well on my writing but I need to remember to put the correct punctuation at the end of a sentence." Another student said: "I should add more details from the text." During instruction in classes visited, all teachers used direct whole class questioning and/or conferred with students individually and in small groups to check for understanding. Immediate follow up on their findings were not noted in a few classrooms, including one where after listening to incorrect responses from a few students, the teacher moved on with the lesson without addressing the students' misconceptions.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations for high levels of shared accountability for staff and student learning. All staff members communicate and partner with families to support expectations around college and career readiness goals for all students.

Impact

Effective communication of and support for high expectations for all staff foster shared accountability for improving teaching and learning across the school. Strong partnerships among staff and families result in students' progress in meeting high expectations for their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders utilize a staff handbook, weekly bulletins, and handouts of professional literature to communicate high expectations for teaching and learning. Observation reports show that school leaders also make instructional expectations explicit by providing specific, timely, and actionable feedback that addresses targeted elements of teacher practice, based on cycles of observation aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. One teacher noted that she received feedback advising her to work harder on questioning for higher order thinking. Another teacher added that she needed to work on using turn-and-talks to improve student engagement in learning. During a teacher team interview, teachers noted that they are all held accountable for instruction that reflects “Discussion, Engagement, Assessment, and Rigor” (DEAR).
- Based on their interests, professional goals and learning needs, as well as the identified learning needs of all students whom they teach, teachers receive ongoing professional development from consultants and school-based staff, including administrators and teacher leaders. English as a Second Language teachers and teachers of students with disabilities collaborate with peers around strategies for addressing the academic, linguistic, and social emotional needs of students in these subgroups, as applicable. Teachers reported that they also participate in peer intervisitations focused on academic rigor, student work and engagement, questioning and discussion strategies, and using assessment in instruction. Teachers and school leaders noted that these practices have contributed to schoolwide growth in student achievement, as measured by *GO Math!* assessment data.
- Teachers host meetings, conduct workshops, and make phone calls to families, to communicate high expectations for students, especially during dedicated parent engagement time on Tuesdays and a monthly “Parent Hour”. Teachers also distribute to families, grade specific newsletters that outline units of study, sample tasks, learning goals and strategies and tips for working with children at home. During the interview with families, participants stated that staff members keep them informed of their children’s progress through emails, phone calls, progress reports, a *Class Dojo*, and one-to-one conferences. Families also stated that they are invited to partner with teachers in classrooms and participated in workshops and other planned activities, including a “Back to School” event that exposed them to learning standards and expectations for their children’s readiness for the current and next grade. Several families spoke about learning with their children at home via *Think-Central*, an online program of remediation and enrichment activities in math.