



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. / I.S. 155 Nicholas Herkimer

K-8 School K155

**1355 Herkimer Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Nelly Cortes

**Date of review: May 13, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

The School Context

P.S. / I.S. 155 Nicholas Herkimer is a K-8 school with 508 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 50% Black, 46% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 12% English Language Learners and 20% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 88.2%.

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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and revised using student work and data.

Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence and provide access to the curricula for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Faculty and staff utilize Common Core-aligned curricula in the core content areas. *ReadyGen* is used for English Language Arts (ELA) from kindergarten to grade 2, and *Expeditionary Learning* is used for grades 3 through 8. *GO Math!* is used for math from kindergarten to grade 5, and *CMP3* with supplements from *GO Math!* are used for grades 6, 7, and 8. *Harcourt Science* and *Houghton Mifflin* social studies curricula are implemented from kindergarten to grade 8. This year, school leaders and teachers are focusing on designing coherent instruction and engaging students in learning, and they have made purposeful decisions to supplement and adjust curricula to provide tiered instruction. Teachers include student groupings, supplemental materials, and differentiated tasks in lesson plans.
- To support the school's focus on designing coherent instruction, lesson plans follow a school-wide template that includes components school leaders and teachers have decided are key to coherent instruction. The lesson template includes the big idea, essential question, learning objective, performance standards, learning targets, instructional shifts, materials, vocabulary, whole and small group instruction, tiered tasks, closing, and assessment. Lesson plans reviewed demonstrated adherence to this format across grades and content areas. An ELA lesson on the character Atticus from *To Kill a Mockingbird* outlined key questions for whole group and partner discussion before sending students off to work in tiered groups with scaffolded questions and tasks that required all students to provide text-based answers and write from sources.
- Teachers use data from formal and informal assessments and student work to adjust curriculum tasks, create scaffolded graphic organizers, and assign students to targeted work groups based on learning needs. Lesson plans include differentiated plans for tier 1, 2, and 3 student work groups. Tier 1 students are on grade level for the targeted task, tier 2 students are approaching grade level and require some additional supports, and tier 3 students are high-need requiring targeted supports. A math lesson includes the same learning objective for all students to solve real world problems involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division of fractions and mixed numbers. However, problems assigned to each group varied in number and level of difficulty. The lesson also includes plans for targeted teacher support and supplemental materials for tier 2 and 3 groups, which include fraction strips and a problem solving graphic organizer.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create rubrics and assessments that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals but have yet to track student progress across grades and subjects.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to teachers and students, and teachers use the results to adjust curricula and instruction. However, assessment practices have yet to create a clear picture of students' progress across grades and subjects so that all students can demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the *ReadyGen*, *Expeditionary Learning*, *CMP3*, and *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt* curricula. Assessments and rubrics align to levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 across grades and content areas. Teachers use data from assessments to plan, reteach, and add supplemental lessons and tiered instruction based on student learning needs. This year, teachers have used assessment data to plan additional instruction on vocabulary development, student use of relevant evidence in writing, and developing math fluency. Teachers have also provided departmentalized instruction on grades 3 through 8 in order to group students to focus on targeted skills in math and ELA.
- Teachers assess student work using rubrics that provide clear descriptions of learning expectations at each level of performance for targeted skills. Teachers also created student accessible rubrics that include both teacher feedback on the next steps for learning and a student reflection. A grade 5 and 6 problem-solving rubric assesses math knowledge, strategic knowledge, and student explanations on a four-point scale. Teacher feedback on this rubric includes recommendations for students to begin writing and solving their own word problems, review specific math concepts, and focus on the placement of decimal points. Students reflect on feedback and record next steps in the reflection section of the rubric.
- School leaders and faculty use common assessments to determine student progress, including Measures of Student Learning assessments in ELA and math administered at the beginning, middle, and end-of-year. Teachers administer mid- and end-of-unit assessments, chapter tests, and performance tasks in ELA and math from kindergarten to grade 8. Assessment results have led to adjustments in the lesson plan format to include pivotal and essential questions and instructional shifts in ELA and math. Assessment data revealed that students in kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 lacked basic reading skills and students in the upper grades lacked fluency in math. This data led to a focus on phonics, sight words, and *Fountas and Pinnell* running records in the early grades and fluency in grade 3.
- Teachers track progress of students in ELA reading, phonics, sight words using *Fountas and Pinnell* levels, phonics checklists, sight word inventories, and *GO Math!* assessments. This data creates a clear picture of student progress toward goals in ELA and math; however, teachers have yet to track progress in other core content areas.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teachers consistently provide multiple entry points into the curriculum.

Impact

Alignment to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts ensures that all learners are engaged and demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders shared articulated beliefs around how students learn best which include teacher planning for coherent instruction, high levels of student engagement and interaction, opportunities for self-assessment, and a risk-free environment. Across classrooms visited, teacher practices provided evidence of adherence to these beliefs. Teachers' lesson plans aligned to the observed instruction and students were engaged at high levels with each other, the learning tasks, and the materials. Students freely posed questions to teachers, shared their misconceptions, and assessed their own learning using a "Fist to Five" protocol.
- Across classrooms visited, teachers provided multiple entry points for students via differentiated tasks for groups of students, scaffolded graphic organizers, leveled questions and texts, the use of technology, conversation prompts, visual images, and a variety of manipulatives. In an ELA lesson, the teacher provided tiered groups with differentiated questions to discuss the same character. Each group was able to use their leveled questions and assigned quotes from the text to gather information that would answer the essential question, "What character traits or qualities are revealed by Atticus' words and actions?" In a science classroom, the teacher assigned students to four leveled groups to conduct experiments on mold and bacteria and answer the essential question, "What role does mold and bacteria have within our ecosystem?" The entry-level group examined various forms of mold and a bacterium using magnifying glasses and microscopes, and the highest performing group was working on an independent project to explain how pathogens are used in forensic pathology.
- Across classrooms, students engaged in group discussions and produced work products that demonstrated their thinking. A group of science students conducted independent research and produced a large-scale line graph on the impact of various environments on the growth of mold. The graph was accompanied by a table of the results and summary statements on the impact of light, darkness, moisture, and indoor and outdoor environments on the growth of mold samples. In a social studies classroom, students worked in tiered groups to determine how the geography of China may have affected the development of Chinese civilizations. Student groups produced charts, Venn diagrams, artwork, and Chinese characters that demonstrated their understanding of the similarities and differences of the Zhou, Qin, and Shang dynasties. The high level of thinking evident in both discussions and student work products was present in most of the student work observed.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide professional learning to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to students.

Impact

Accountability systems ensure that students receive detailed feedback and supports that prepare all students for the next level of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff via a staff handbook updated and distributed at the beginning of every school year, monthly faculty conferences, bi-weekly grade conferences, and professional development sessions. School leaders participate in unit planning and conduct formal observations and “quick check” informal observations to provide ongoing verbal feedback on the use of targeted instructional practices and techniques learned during professional development. This year, teachers have participated in professional development sessions on examining student work, analyzing student data, designing coherent instruction, the development of high-level questions, and strategies to engage students with disabilities. School leaders highlight best practices and the use of new teaching tools during faculty conferences.
- The instructional focus for 2015-2016 is to “enhance the rigor of lessons in order to increase student engagement.” School leaders communicate to staff the instructional practices they expect to see that will support this focus. Expected practices include the use of open-ended questions, rubrics with teacher comments and next steps, multiple entry points for struggling students, and collaborative planning for instructional coherence. Teachers interviewed shared the school leadership’s expectations for teaching and learning, and the expected practices were observed across classrooms visited. For example, in an ELA lesson, the teacher asked students to explain what advice the mother in the poem, *Mother to Son*, is trying to give her son and what does the mother want the son to do. In addition, lesson plans reviewed include open-ended questions and student work samples are accompanied by rubrics with teacher comments, next steps, and student reflections.
- Teacher teams and staff provide ongoing exposure to college and career readiness highlighted by a college and career readiness week in January that plans daily activities for all grades. The kindergarten week begins with parents and students conducting research to find a college that matches what their kindergarten child wants to be when they grow up. A career day in May had guest speakers visit classrooms and share their education, college preparation, and skills needed for their chosen career. The guidance department provides early and ongoing student support with the high school application process. An October 2015 workshop agenda included an overview of the application process for public, specialized, and performing arts high schools, as well as the process and websites for private and parochial schools. Teachers select monthly college and career readiness skills to discuss with students and post what teachers loved most about college and the skills or characteristics needed to get to college. Posted skills included perseverance, focus, application, and diligence. Students interviewed shared that they feel they are being prepared for the next level. A grade 8 student shared that the teachers are already giving students grade 9 materials in ELA and math to get them ready for the hard work ahead.

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 and teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

Professional collaboration and a focus on student achievement strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly for grade level inquiry as per the schoolwide inquiry-meeting schedule. Grade teams also meet with administration for targeted inquiry and data analysis on a rotating schedule. During inquiry, teachers review student data, examine student work, and identify individual, group, and grade level next steps. Teachers examine student work using a schoolwide examining student work protocol. The protocol template includes the student data focus, materials provided, standards assessed, and assessment criteria. Teachers identify how well the students meet the standards, what specific skills they are lacking, and any patterns. Teachers then identify at least one concrete next step for instruction and additional tools to ensure mastery. A March 2016 grade 1 template identifies a pattern in the use of random capital letters and spelling errors. The next step for instruction was purposeful teaching of paragraph writing using simple sentences focusing on capital letters and spelling.
- Teachers interviewed shared that the work on teacher teams has improved their instructional practice in a variety of ways. One teacher shared that she has learned new ways to organize student data and identify learning trends. Another teacher shared that her team is better at data analysis and using data to identify areas of need for individual and groups of students. An early childhood teacher shared that the early grades were in need of phonics support and a special education teacher on the team recommended *Foundations*. Teachers across the early grades are now using techniques from *Foundations*, like tapping and magnetic board letters, to support struggling learners in phonics and grammar.
- Teacher teams across the grades analyze student work and data during grade level inquiry and leadership sponsored “data chats.” During a December 2015 data chat, teachers analyzed the results from the 2015 New York State ELA assessment. Teachers reviewed item skills analysis data and analyzed short response questions to identify implications for teaching, and they generated short response questions aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. School leaders and teachers shared that inquiry work and the sharing of best practices has had a positive impact on the effectiveness of teaching strategies and improved student progress toward goals. Grade 2 teachers shared that they are better at outlining learning expectations for students and students are aware of their learning goals. Another teacher shared that the impact of the inquiry work is evident in student progress on running record and phonics assessments. A review of student data revealed that students in grade 2 have made significant progress toward goals since September. In September 2015, 34% of student were in tier 2 for reading. In May 2016, 75% of the tier 2 student moved to tier 1 and are reading on grade level.