



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 164 Caesar Rodney

Elementary School K164

**4211 14th Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11219**

Principal: Erica Steinberg

**Date of review: March 29, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

P.S. 164 Caesar Rodney is an elementary school with 590 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 32% Asian, 2% Black, 49% Hispanic, and 14% White students. The student body includes 16% English Language Learners and 18% 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 95.8%.

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	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
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Findings

Administrators systematically convey high expectations to staff, students and families and support them towards success in meeting the expectations.

Impact

School leaders' emphasis on high quality work by all staff and students results in a culture of shared responsibility for learning and ongoing improvement in staff and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal articulates high expectations for all members of the school community, through discussions at regular faculty conferences and grade and department meetings. A staff handbook and individual and team conversations underscore expectations related to instruction, professional development, and other areas of school operations. During the teacher team meetings several teachers stated that the principal sets clear expectations for teaching and learning through a "Weekly Notes" bulletin with reminders about learning targets and expectations and an explicit schoolwide instructional focus on engaging students in learning and ongoing assessment. Teachers also reported that they are expected to deliver high quality instruction that illustrates use of multiple entry points to learning, small group work, effective questioning and discussion and dissemination of meaningful feedback to students.
- All teachers receive ongoing professional development from consultants, including Teachers College (TC) staff developers, and school-based staff, all of whom help them to meet instructional expectations. Teachers participate in a variety of school based professional learning events, including lunch and learns and study groups, as documented on a professional learning plan. At team meetings during the Quality Review, teachers noted that they also participate in off-site professional learning events based on their grade assignments, content areas or interests. Some teachers reported that they attended workshops related to reading and writing curricula, others attended events for arts instruction, while some visited showcase schools to learn best practices. School leaders noted that these practices continue to improve staff and student achievement across the school.
- Families reported that all teachers host meetings, conduct workshops, and make phone calls to families, to communicate high expectations for students, especially during parent engagement time on Tuesdays and at curriculum nights. Teachers also distribute to families, grade-specific newsletters that outline units of study, sample tasks, 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, and notes in their children's notebooks. Families also stated that they are invited to visit classrooms and participate in events such as workshops that train them to use web-based programs to support their children's readiness for the next grade. In turn, some volunteer as career speakers in classes, help package supplies for science activities, contribute time for a variety of skill building activities for other families, and help with special projects such as a recent 100 days of school celebration of student projects.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices are aligned to curricula and identify some gaps in student learning. However, assessment data do not yet yield a clear portrait of student mastery of learning targets across grades and content areas.

Impact

Across the vast majority of classrooms, students are not supported with meaningful and accurate feedback that includes clear next steps to improve their learning and adjustments to curricula and instruction are not yet effectively addressing all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers implement multiple forms of assessment such as Assessment Pro baseline assessments and end-of-unit assessments, and use the resulting data to evaluate student proficiency and content knowledge related to performance tasks. The *Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP)* program has generated three cycles of reading and writing assessments to date, yielding reading level data for all students and providing pre- and post-unit assessment data on student proficiency in writing. The *GO Math!* program provides for a variety of assessments, including a beginning of the year and a middle of the year performance task assessment, as well as chapter and unit assessments. Teachers are currently engaged in implementing additional assessments to further identify student needs and accelerate student mastery of unit goals.
- All assessments are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and assessment dates are linked to school wide curriculum calendars that denote specific periods for focused progress monitoring to determine which standards students have mastered and which ones need remediation. Based on their findings, teachers determine needed adjustments to curricula and instruction. The principal noted that as a result of a review of grade level assessment data, all teachers now engage in inquiry-based activities linked to flexible grouping and differentiation of tasks as part of re-teaching activities for all students. Lesson plans also show consistent use of data to flexibly group students for instruction and differentiate tasks across content areas and grades. However, while math and reading level progression data show that these moves are leading to student progress towards learning targets, increased mastery of goals by a vast majority of students is not yet evident across grades and content areas.
- Teachers use a school-wide grading policy, aligned to curricula, to provide feedback to students on their performance on learning tasks. Bulletin boards also show that teachers use a variety of rubrics, including task-specific rubrics, to assess student proficiency on performance tasks across grades and disciplines. During the meeting with students, a majority stated that they use rubrics and checklists to guide completion of tasks in class and for homework. However, some feedback seen on student work on bulletin boards and in student folders consisted of the teacher circling portions of the rubric or writing brief comments that did not reflect the content of the task or application of the rubric related to the task. Further, a few of the students interviewed were not able to clearly state what they needed to do to improve the work displayed, based on the feedback written on the work.

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, essential questions, assessments, target vocabulary, texts, sample tasks and modifications for students in all subgroups. Unit and lesson plans provide teachers with content from *TCRWP* curricula for literacy based tasks across content areas and from *GO Math!* and *Exemplars* curricula for instruction in math. *EngageNY* resources supplement curricula for additional focus on instructional shifts in literacy and math. Pacing calendars, aligned to the New York State and City scope and sequence, guide project-based instruction in social studies and science and teachers cull content from the Department of Education's resources for pre-kindergarten classes. Content and tasks for art, music, technology and library skills classes round out curricula offerings designed to expose all students to college and career readiness experiences and expectations.
- Unit maps, lesson plans, and student work, reflect Common Core aligned academic tasks that require students to engage in activities such as close reading of the texts, crafting essays that involve making a claim and supporting the claim with text based evidence, and preparing 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 inquiry based independent learning projects and enrichment activities embedded in units. A task for kindergarten students involved them in creating a comic strip, a task for grade 4 students required them to research and use drawings to illustrate aspects of the lives of American Indians and a task for grade 5 students involved an informational essay about the Gold Rush.
- In curriculum maps and lesson plans, learning tasks are linked to visuals, sentence frames, manipulatives, and technology-based supports, including laptops and interactive white boards, to support successful completion of tasks by all learners, especially English as a New Language (ENL) students and students with disabilities. Unit plans show that teachers front-load tiered vocabulary and connect skills and unit goals to learning tasks that support language acquisition. *Imagine Learning* is being used to accelerate learning by ENL students and programs such as *Foundations*, *Month by Month Phonics*, *Preventing Academic Failure*, *Words Their Way*, *Wordly Wise*, and *Raz-Kids* provide enrichment and remediation tasks for students in the applicable grades and subgroups.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, academic tasks immerse students in rigorous work and peer to peer discussions. Routine use of task extensions to further differentiate learning for students at varied proficiency levels is not yet the norm across classrooms.

Impact

Although all 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

- 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. Some teachers worked with small guided groups while others circulated amongst students, monitoring their work as they completed independent tasks. In a grade 2 class, the teacher challenged students to use a checklist to create drawings with captions that illustrate features of an urban, rural or suburban community, based on lessons about types of communities. The students then had to discuss how a person might feel if they had to move from one type of community to another and why.
- In most classrooms visited, students worked on differentiated group tasks but most teachers did not provide additional activities or extensions of tasks for the most advanced learners. As an example, in one of the classes visited, students worked with peers in comparing and contrasting features that distinguish night from day. The teacher invited them to line up and to look out a window in the classroom and then discuss what they saw with peers. Then they had to make connections between what they had observed and what was depicted on charts with pictures at work stations around the room, before creating their own illustration of night versus day. Some students finished the task quickly but could not move on because others were not yet finished. Further, 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 a grade 3 class, the teacher engaged small groups of students in using a checklist to complete a task which required them to read a selection to identify the theme and support their response with details and evidence from the text. Students could be heard arguing about which sentence represented the theme as they cited evidence from the text to justify their response, which was written on a graphic organizer. They were directed to use the checklist to review the work done by peers in their group. Although some students did not reference the rubric criteria in providing feedback to peers, the lesson generated a high level of peer-to-peer discussion across the room. This was not the case in a few other rooms, where discussions emerged as brief turn and talks, followed by teacher-centered conversations involving only a few students who were called upon to answer questions.

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 practices result in student progress towards learning goals and deepen teacher capacity to deliver high quality instruction to all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams of teachers and support staff for each grade level work together to analyze student work and data and identify instructional practices that target student needs. All teachers are focused on planning for instruction that is aligned with findings from rounds of math and literacy assessments, including *TCRWP* running records and math unit assessments. They collaborate during designated times, including common planning periods that allow them to meet regularly with peers, including teachers of students with disabilities and gifted and talented students. Team activities include norming of ratings of student work and ongoing alignment of units of study to incorporate increasingly more rigorous tasks for all students. Teachers noted that teamwork has improved their pedagogy and school leaders used pie charts with reading progression data and a bar graph with data from unit assessments in math to illustrate gains in student achievement, which they attribute to effective teamwork.
- Teachers reported that teams target the lowest performing students in grades 3 through 5, including students with special needs and ENL learners, for intensive remediation activities. During the Quality Review, members of a teacher team used a rubric for responding to short response items to examine samples of work from a writing performance task assigned to grade 5 students in a target group. Using a protocol for examining student work, the facilitating teacher asked peers to rate the work, highlight strengths and weaknesses and identify strategies for improving the work. One teacher suggested modeling to show students how to unpack vocabulary in a question before attempting to answer it. Another recommended revisiting the use of a “Restate, Answer, Detail, Detail” (RADD) frame to clarify how students can use it as a checklist to craft a response with text-based details that are relevant to the question. Team meeting documents reveal similar collaborations focused on outlining strategies and scaffolds to help all students to master performance tasks.
- Teachers described many teams with teacher leaders who work collaboratively with school leaders and other support staff in making critical decisions about teaching and learning schoolwide. Teams include grade teams, vertical teams, inquiry teams, a family engagement team, a professional learning team, a School Implementation Team (SIT), Pupil Personnel Team (PPT) and several committees, with members who work directly with other teachers and school leaders to implement protocols and develop curricula and instructional initiatives. School leaders and teachers indicate that peer leaders help select instructional resources, design and implement professional learning activities that align with school and district goals, attend workshops, and turnkey strategies to help build instructional capacity for all teachers. Teacher leaders noted that school leaders readily provide resources that they request or recommend for use by staff and students across the school.