

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**P.S. 165 Ida Posner**

**Elementary – Middle School K165**

**76 Lott Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11212**

**Principal: Alphonso Bonds**

**Date of review: March 4, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

## The School Context

P.S. 165 Ida Posner is an elementary – middle school with 415 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 82% Black, 15% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 26% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 86.4%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

### Impact

Structured collaboration strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers and results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- This year, professional learning sessions are restructured so that the second and third Mondays are reserved for grade level inquiry team meetings. Inquiry teams meet twice each month. Teams look at student work and assessment data around the essential question, “What, So What, Now What?” Inquiry teams analyze student data, identify trends, discuss the implications for instruction, and plan next steps for individual and groups of students. During the inquiry team observation, teachers analyzed student short responses to a text-based question. Teachers reviewed low- and middle-level writing samples, shared identified strengths and areas of need, discussed instructional implications, and planned next steps. Next steps include the use of the RACE (restate, answer, cite and explain) strategy as a checklist, chunking text, supporting students in making text-to-self connections, and the use of visuals to support a lack of prior knowledge.
- Teachers from each grade meet weekly for common planning time. During common planning, teachers review units, create lessons, and plan for differentiated learning groups. The majority of lesson plans collected include plans for tiered instruction and differentiated grouping. An English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plans for tier one, tier two, and tier three groups and includes recommended scaffolds. This lesson states that the teacher will provide additional supports for the tier three group. Listed supports include a read aloud, the chunking of text, visuals, and graphic organizers.
- During the teacher team meetings, teachers shared improvements in their teaching practice as a result of collaboration on grade level and inquiry teams. One teacher noted that working with colleagues in her grade ensures that she maintains her curriculum pacing. Another teacher shared that the team has learned to use student data to drive and differentiate instruction. Teachers also noted that they have learned new strategies that have led to student improvement for groups of students. One teacher shared that a team member recommended the use of math sentence stems and starters to support student writing in math. Targeted students have demonstrated growth in written responses to math problems after learning to use the math stems.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts.

### Impact

Although alignment to beliefs is evident in some classrooms, inconsistencies in teaching practices result in uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared school beliefs around how students learn best which include explicit instruction, modeling, anchor charts, small group instruction, and high levels of student engagement. Although there was evidence of direct instruction, anchor charts, and small group instruction in most classrooms, the presence of modeling and high levels of student engagement were inconsistent across classrooms visited. Anchor charts with examples were present in most of the classrooms visited. An ELA anchor chart states, “Inferring is using the text and your background knowledge to ‘put the pieces together.’ What do you think?” The chart includes a visual of a thought bubble with a variety of examples including, “use clues from text, think about my own experiences and think about what I already know.” Modeling varies across classrooms and is absent or inadequate in some classrooms. In a math lesson, the teacher asked students to fold a piece of paper to create thirds and sixths. There was no model of this activity and several students were unable to fold the paper correctly and did not achieve the objective.
- In some classrooms, teachers engaged students in high-level discussions, however, the level of engagement varied as students completed their assigned tasks. During a lesson, students discussed a character’s struggle as she contemplated an escape from slavery. Students debated whether or not the character should escape and used text evidence to support their answers. One student stated that the slave girl should run away because in the text it says that she would be whipped and sold. Another student responded that she should not run away because if she was caught she might be killed. To support his answer he cited the text and shared that another character who attempted to run away was beaten and killed. The level of thinking and discussion during this portion of the lesson engaged all learners, however, the pacing of the lesson resulted in several students waiting as the teacher listened in to all pairs.
- In some classrooms, teachers use real world examples, pictorial representations, mnemonic devices, and student discussion to engage students in the learning process. During a lesson, the teacher provided students with worksheets and wipe off boards to draw representations of fractions, and students used CUBE (circle, underline, box, and explain) to support comprehension of the word problems. Students shared their thinking, drawings, and process with classmates. One student shared, “I counted the groups then I multiplied five times six to get thirty.” The level of thinking and participation was high in this class; however, the teacher did not review the materials students needed to bring to the rug. The teacher instructed students to return to their desks twice to retrieve materials. The lack of clarity led to missed learning and lost time on task.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Curricula reflects plans to engage a diversity of learners and emphasizes rigorous habits, however, lesson plans inconsistently emphasize higher order skills across grades and subjects and for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Impact

Inconsistent planning for rigorous instruction and access for all learners limits instructional coherence across grades and content areas and hinders student engagement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *Ready Gen*, *Foundations*, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, and *GO Math!* as well as the New York State scope and sequence for science and social studies. These curricula emphasize rigorous habits and include academic tasks that require students to demonstrate their thinking. A *GO Math!* lesson on fractions requires students to show fractional parts of a group and is aligned to the math instructional shifts for fluency, deep understanding, and application. This level of rigor is not consistent across lesson plans collected. A grade 1 lesson plan requires students to use a ten frame to solve the problem, “Tom had 14 pennies. He gave four pennies to his sister. How many pennies does Tom have now?” Students observed during this lesson were able to solve this equation mentally and did not require the ten frame for support. Several students were disengaged during this whole-class guided practice.
- Some lesson plans collected include supports, scaffolds, and extensions to provide access for a diversity of learners. A social studies lesson plan on immigration and assimilation includes plans for audio stories of immigration, KWL (know, want to know, and learned), graphic organizers, and large maps. This lesson also includes extension activities to use yarn and pins to identify places where students’ ancestors originated and make text-to-self connections to the immigrants in the stories. This level of planning to support a diversity of learners was not yet evident across grades and content areas.
- Some lesson plans collected included plans for tiered instructional groups and differentiated tasks aligned to the same skills. A reading lesson plan included three tiered groups with differentiated tasks to meet the objective of understanding how the sequence of events in a story helps readers understand cause and effect relationships. The lesson plan required tier one students to identify the relationship between two or more events by answering comprehension questions. Tier two students would receive a second read aloud of the text and use a graphic organizer to sequence the events in the story. Tier three students would also receive a second read of the text and use a story map and drawing to sequence the events before listing key events in the text. This level of planning to engage the lowest third, ELLs, and students with disabilities, though evident in some lessons, was not yet present across grades and content areas.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### **Findings**

Teachers are beginning to use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies aligned to the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teaching practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

### **Impact**

Inconsistent use of assessment practices across grades and content areas limit feedback to students and teachers and hinders effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers consistently use rubrics aligned to the ELA curriculum to assess writing projects, however, the use of curriculum-aligned rubrics is inconsistent across content areas. Student work samples reviewed during the student interview included rubrics in less than half of the assignments. In most cases, teachers used rubrics for written assignments in ELA. Rubrics describe performance levels on a scale of 1 to 4 with descriptors at each level. Teachers identified the student level of performance by marking the level for each descriptor. Students interviewed were able to share the level or score received but could not clearly articulate their next learning steps based on the rubrics.
- During the student interview, students shared that they usually receive written feedback on "big projects." The majority of students stated that most feedback is provided verbally. Students shared that teachers sometimes write notes on their work that tells them how they did and what to do next. A review of student work showed that teachers are beginning to supplement numeric scores and rubric levels with student friendly comments that include some next steps for learning. Teacher feedback on a grade 3 writing task states, "You told the story bit by bit, we will work on your elaboration." Teacher feedback on a grade 3 math tasks states that the teacher will work with the student on using parentheses with order of operations and added, "You have the correct solution to the question. We will work on math language." This level of student friendly feedback with next steps for learning is not yet present across grades and content areas.
- In some classrooms, teachers have begun to use checks for understanding in the form of questioning and exit tickets. A grade 4 teacher used the data from the previous day's exit ticket to plan the problem of the day. While students solved the problem of the day, the teacher checked for understanding using questions. The teacher asked, "What is the problem asking? How are you going to solve it? How are you going to find the larger number?" The teacher made notes of student responses. Some of the lesson plans reviewed included exit tickets. A math lesson on fractional parts of a whole includes an exit ticket that asks students to explain how to find which is greater, one-fourth or one-third of twelve. Although checks for understanding were present in some of the lessons observed, they were not present consistently across classrooms.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

### **Findings**

School leaders and staff are developing systems to provide families with feedback regarding student progress toward a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

### **Impact**

Guidance and supports are developing the level of detail needed to prepare students for the next level of learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school communicates with families via backpacked letters, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. Teachers make calls to families and meet with parents every Tuesday afternoon. The school sends home academic progress reports three times a year in between the fall, winter, and spring report cards. Parents reported that the school communicates with them regularly and responds promptly to requests. One parent of a student with disabilities shared that her child's teacher is supporting her in helping her child with reading and writing at home.
- Parents shared that the school has held meetings to explain the Common Core Learning Standards and some grades have invited parents in to share what to expect in the grade. A parent of a grade 8 student shared that she received assistance with the high school application process when she was confused by the application. Parents volunteer at Parent Teacher Association functions and for administrative tasks. Although parents shared that the school provides support and information when requested, systems to provide families with consistent communication and feedback are still developing.
- Teachers and staff communicate high expectations to all students and are developing supports to clarify those expectations for students. Teachers use a school-wide SLANT (Sit up, lean forward, ask and answer questions, nod your head, and track the speaker) strategy to guide classroom learning expectations. The school has hosted two college and career days this year. Students have participated in financial planning workshops and career presentations by community members. One teacher is piloting a Living the Dream program that supports students in exploring their current and future life dreams and what it takes to make them come true. A grade 8 student shared that teachers are preparing him for high school by exposing him to high school level work, including algebra and the RACE strategy, which helps him organize his ideas.