



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 185 Walter Kassenbrock

Elementary School K185

**8601 Ridge Boulevard
Brooklyn
NY 11209**

Principal: Rena Goudelias

**Date of review: December 11, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

P.S. 185 Walter Kassenbrock is an elementary school with 665 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 0% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 73% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 14% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.3%.

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

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

Impact

There is mutual accountability for high levels of teaching and learning across the school. Strong partnerships between staff and families contribute to students' progress in meeting high expectations for their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Based on 2014-2015 Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) data and teachers' self-selected professional goals, teachers receive ongoing professional development from school-based staff, including administrators and teacher leaders. Teachers of both English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities collaborate with peers around strategies for addressing the academic and social emotional needs of students in these subgroups. Professional learning activities focus specifically on topics such as designing coherent instruction, questioning and discussion techniques and engaging students in learning. There is also training linked to implementation of curricula such as *Recipe for Reading*, *My Library*, *Great Leaps*, *Open Court*, *Mentoring Minds* and *Science Fusion*, to support teachers in meeting instructional expectations
- During the teacher team meetings, several teachers stated that the principal reinforces high expectations for teaching and learning through a monthly calendar, staff handbook, weekly staff meetings, and other professional learning sessions. Teachers view videos and engage in inter-visitations to see and read about best practices, as part of their training to meet instructional expectations. Observation reports show that school leaders also make instructional expectations explicit by providing specific, timely, and actionable feedback that addresses the targeted elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Feedback on one observation report advised the teacher to invite students to respond to other students' comments, in order to extend student thinking during discussions. Another teacher's feedback was to maintain high levels of student engagement by "challenging above-average students with word problems that can be completed with a partner."
- Teachers host meetings, conduct workshops, and make phone calls to families, to communicate high expectations for students. In collaboration with all staff, a parent engagement team partners with family members, including some who are Learning Leaders, to implement initiatives to increase parent involvement in their children's learning. Team members help to prepare and disseminate grade specific newsletters that outline units of study, sample tasks, learning goals and strategies for families to work with their children. They also help coordinate parent workshops and the distribution of progress reports for families to be well informed about their children's readiness for the next level. During the interview with families, several stated that they participated in workshops in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, and received training to use online resources that expose them to learning standards for their children. Families partner with school staff to sponsor events such as assemblies, science exhibitions, movie nights, and game nights and have introduced a parent-supported website to house class specific information.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teachers use multiple assessment tools and practices, aligned to curricula, to check for understanding, provide actionable feedback on student performance, and engage students in self-assessment. Teachers' assessment practices do not contribute to a clear portrait of students' mastery of learning goals, across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

There are missed opportunities to use data from ongoing assessments to further inform adjustments that meet student-learning needs and provide all students with feedback that helps them understand next steps towards improving their performance.

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 *Readworks*, *Mentoring Minds*, *MyMath* and *Lead 21*, are also administered for the applicable content areas and grades. Teachers also administer on-demand writing assessments for students in the upper grades. Further, technology-based assessments linked to resources such as *Discovery Education*, *IXL*, and *Think-Central*, offer interactive Common Core-aligned end-of-unit assessments that provide additional data on levels of student achievement.
- Teachers utilize Common Core-aligned rubrics, checklists, and a school-wide grading policy, aligned to the curricula, to evaluate progress in student writing across grades and content areas. There are task specific rubrics attached to units of instruction and student work samples on bulletin boards, indicating levels of student mastery of skills and content acquisition across disciplines. Most classroom bulletin boards with student work showed rubric-based feedback to students, via "glows" and "grows" which illustrate teachers' comments with next steps for students to improve their work. However, some feedback consisted of the teacher only circling portions of the rubric, with no explicit next steps for the student to build on the work for further mastery. Additionally, while all students at the interview said that they work with rubrics and checklists, a few of the students were not able to clearly specify what they needed to do to improve the work based on the feedback seen.
- A review of student work folders revealed that most students use checklists and rubrics to self-assess. In commenting on performance on a unit task, one student said that he used a rubric to determine what he had to include in his essay to "earn a high score". During instruction in classes visited, all teachers used direct-whole class questioning and/or conferred with students individually, providing support for task completion. In addition, most teachers use tools such as white boards, exit slips, and thumbs up, or thumbs down, to check for understanding. However, while teacher-student conference logs illustrate planning for use of the data to address learning needs detected, immediate follow up on findings from checks for understanding during instruction and student independent work time were not noted in a few classrooms. This included a classroom where some students struggled to use multiplication facts to divide by three and did not receive the help they needed to complete the task.

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. Modules sequenced by topics and grades provide teachers with content from curricula such as *Open Court*, *Mentoring Minds*, *Wonder and Recipe for Reading*, which they use to infuse literacy based tasks across interdisciplinary units of study. Math curricula include the Common Core-aligned *My Math* program and units of study linked to *EngageNY* resources, for additional focus on the instructional shifts. Pacing calendars, aligned to the New York State and City scope and sequence, guide instruction in social studies and science, with *Social Studies Networks* and *Lead 21* providing additional content for social studies lessons. *Science Fusion* supports an inquiry-based science program for students across grades.
- All 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. Each unit includes a culminating performance task and a Common Core-aligned rubric for assessing levels of student mastery of content and skills. Monthly pacing calendars by grade, unit maps, lesson plans, and student work, reflect academic tasks that require students to engage in close reading of the texts to complete essays that involve making and supporting claims with text-based evidence. For all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, the use of visuals, graphic organizers, manipulatives, and links to technology-based supports are embedded in unit maps.
- 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 outlined in units. With applications of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) components, teachers create project-based tasks that require students to engage in independent research to illustrate real world applications of math concepts, report on science inquiry work, and prepare critical reviews of reading selections about a variety of topics across disciplines. A grade 5 project required students to report on problems linked to littering. Another project challenged students to design, describe, and create a drawing of a device to address a human need. Curricula for technology, art, music, and dance, add experiences that build students' college and career readiness skills.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms lessons demonstrate applications of multiple entry points and provide students with opportunities to engage in text-based discussions.

Impact

School wide, teachers' consistent incorporation of multiple entry points and scaffolds in instruction foster students' participation in ongoing discussions, and the completion of rigorous tasks, that demonstrate higher order thinking in work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students to be highly engaged in learning. In a grade 4 science class the teacher used a white board to present a mini-lesson about adaptations of birds. She gave each group of students a tray with tools such as chopsticks, pliers, forceps, and a spoon, each to be used to pick up objects such as shredded lettuce, rice, gummy worms, and sunflower seeds, in the same way a bird would use its beak to pick up food. Students experimented with ways to pick up the food, using the tools in their tray to determine which "beak" works best for each type of food. The teacher directed them to use a bird beak activity sheet to record noticings, which they shared with peers. These types of supports and practices were also noted in a grade 5 social studies Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class where students viewed a video, read a text, referred to vocabulary and guiding questions on a chart, and then engaged in group discussions about the development of early civilizations.
- In a grade 5 ELA class, students engaged in peer-to-peer questioning and discussion as they worked in groups to determine character traits, by examining details in readings about characters' feelings, words, actions, and thoughts. After reading portions of their group's text, students conferred with peers to respond to questions such as, "What do the character's words tell you about how he/she is feeling?", and "How do the character's words and thoughts affect his actions?" Students used a Feelings, Actions, Sayings and Thoughts (FAST) chart to outline responses to the questions. Students could be heard expressing their points of view and challenging their peers' thinking in a discussion of details about the character and the applicable trait. The high level of peer-to-peer discussion evidenced in this class was not noted in a few other classrooms, including an ELA class where most students sat quietly listening to the teacher reading from *Amazing Animal Journeys*. A few students were called on to answer low-level questions about what the teacher read.
- Student engagement in challenging work was evident in most classrooms. In a grade 4 social studies class, groups of students worked on differentiated tasks, based on their study of the Iroquois and Algonquian peoples. Tasks included reading for information about the homes, roles of women, government, or customs of these two groups of Native Americans. The teacher directed students to create a chart to support a presentation of their findings to the class. The teacher also asked students to create a question to be asked of peers during the class share session. In a grade 4 math class, similar practices resulted in students being challenged to use four operations and math models to interpret and solve multi-step word problems. The teacher modeled close reading of a sample word problem, highlighting clues that tell which operation is applicable and then charting steps to show the solution. Students followed up by working on differentiated word problems in groups, where they compared the strategies and models used and discussed the rationale for their choices.

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 pedagogy and student achievement. Distributive leadership structures facilitate teacher collaboration with school leaders to make high-level 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 that deepen teacher’s capacity to positively impact student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher team activities illustrate shared practices as teachers collaborate to identify strategies for designing and adjusting instruction as needed to accelerate students’ mastery of Common Core Standards. Teachers reported that they look at item analysis data from New York State exams and unit assessments to determine individual student mastery of specific standards. They examine student work and use their findings to drive action plans for students, including remediation and enrichment activities for all students. School leaders and teachers noted that teamwork continues to improve teacher pedagogy, as per MOTP data, and contributes to improvement in student achievement, as per ELA data showing gains by groups of students, including those targeted by inquiry team members.
- Team meeting agendas and logs illustrate inter-and-intra grade level cycles of inquiry-based team activities which teachers engage in across the school. During the Quality Review, members of a grade 5 teacher team examined samples of student work from a unit assessment of students’ ability to identify character traits, based on details from the text, *Tuck Everlasting*. The facilitator used the “Notice and Wonder” protocol to lead peers in identifying and recording strengths and deficiencies in the work. Participants compared their findings from each work sample and moved to “wonderings” about how to address learning gaps, including students’ inability to connect details about a character to words that capture the traits accurately. Peers offered suggestions to improve student mastery of characterization, including the use of a graphic organizer to re-teach the skill and help students to distinguish between a trait and details that are evidence of that trait.
- Teacher leaders, including grade leaders, an instructional coach, a special education coordinator, mentor teachers, and members of the technology, school spirit, grant writing, Academic Intervention Services (AIS), and parent engagement teams, work with school leaders and peers in implementing school-wide protocols and developing curricula and instructional initiatives. They lead all staff in analyzing school data to identify and address gaps in student learning, provide input in selecting instructional resources and help establish professional learning priorities across all staff. Some of these staff members are part of the administrative cabinet, where they work with school leaders on the design of E-lab math and science projects, and all teachers take turns serving as a facilitator of their team’s meeting, as the teams move through rotations of planned activities each week. In this role they create agendas, record minutes, and document attendance at the meetings, keeping school leaders and peers informed about professional learning activities schoolwide.