



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 199 Frederick Wachtel

Elementary School K199

**1100 Elm Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11230**

Principal: Rosalia Bacarella

**Date of review: October 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

P.S. 199 Frederick Wachtel is an elementary school with 497 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 21% Asian, 4% Black, 27% Hispanic, and 48% White students. The student body includes 28% English Language Learners and 19% 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 94.4%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms all students are fully engaged in high level discussions and complete intellectually demanding tasks. Teaching practices demonstrate applications of multiple entry points and extensions of tasks for all learners.

Impact

Through consistent application of scaffolds and extensions of curricula, all students engage in rigorous tasks and discussions that culminate in high quality work products across all grades and content areas and foster student ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders place emphasis on providing students with multiple opportunities to participate in high level discussions that allow them to express diverse points of view, justify their thinking and challenge each other's thinking. In all classrooms visited, teachers provided guiding questions that required students to think deeply about concepts and skills taught and cite textual evidence to explain and justify answers during discussions. Through partner turn and talk, small group and whole class discussion in a science class, grade 5 students challenged each other's thinking through high level peer to peer questioning as they used a packet of science handouts and manipulatives to investigate and describe properties of rocks and minerals. The teacher engaged students in reflecting on the differences between an experiment and an investigation. Again, students challenged each other's responses and provided a rationale for their position.
- In all classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students at all levels to be highly engaged in learning. In an early grade self-contained class for students with autism, the teacher used an interactive white board, pictures, words, symbols, gestures and sounds to challenge students to sound out blends. Students learned to say "snow" after seeing a display of "s" followed by "n", followed by the teacher sounding out the blend of "sn" and then displaying a picture of snow. The same steps were repeated to help the students to recognize and sound out the letters for "snake." The session ended with students working with a partner to do a sorting activity to match letters of other blends to pictures and sound out the corresponding words. Some of these types of supports were also noted in a class for English Language Learners in grade 1, who were challenged to connect sounds, letters and pictures to form and enunciate words, with additional support provided as needed from teachers.
- The use of extensions of tasks to deepen student engagement in challenging work was evident in several classrooms, including a grade 5 math class where the teacher engaged students working in groups to create and solve their own math word problem, using academic vocabulary such as division, remainder and quotient. The teacher worked on differentiated tasks with the most struggling learners in small groups across the room while advanced learners worked with peers on self-selected problems. Similarly, in a grade 3 social studies class, students worked on differentiated tasks with peers in groups, reading picture books, taking notes on a graphic organizer, and debating the significance of historical symbols such as the Liberty Bell, Statue of Liberty, the bald eagle and the White House. The teachers challenged students to research other symbols and prepare to use their notes in a follow up essay on the topic.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

All staff members gather data from assessments aligned to curricula, and use the data to provide staff and students with actionable feedback about student performance. However, while all staff members use data from common assessments to track student progress, strategic implementation of adjustments to curricula and instruction is not yet evident in all content areas.

Impact

Assessment practices contribute to a clear snapshot of students' mastery of learning goals, leading to curricular and instructional adjustments that increase levels of mastery by all students. However, there are missed opportunities to further maximize learning by all students by generating and using current data to implement adjustments in all content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's assessment calendar shows that teachers implement common assessments, including Running Records and other baseline assessments in reading, writing and math, assessing student's proficiency and content knowledge related to varied Common Core-aligned performance tasks. In all content areas, there are pre-and post-unit assessments from which teachers cull data and make adjustments to instruction to improve student performance. Assessment practices also include the use of rubrics aligned to curricula and tasks to evaluate and provide feedback on students' performance. A common grading policy drives conversations amongst staff and students during teacher-student conferences.
- Teachers analyze data from assessment tasks, including item analysis data from the 2015 New York State English Language Arts and math assessments, to identify the standards students have mastered and those that require re-teaching or other follow up activities. For example, due to a finding that students across the school struggle with tasks involving comparison and contrast skills, teachers collaborated to incorporate new strategies in re-teaching for student mastery of this skill area. Teachers also use data from assessments to set learning goals and create guided reading groups for intervention and enrichment, based on students' identified mastery levels. However, teachers' analysis of data from more recent, school developed, formative assessments, including Running Records, do not yet drive the implementation of additional targeted adjustments to instruction in all grades and content areas.
- Using a variety of tracking tools and charts, teachers outline students' strengths and needs by grade levels, skills, standards and content areas. An independent reading level progression data tracker shows reading levels and targets for individual students in each class, based on assessment data. A similar tracker illustrates improvement of at least one level of proficiency, by over 40% of all students in all grades tested on the 2015 New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test. Work folders maintained by each student also contain logs with goals set for the student, tracking of the student's progress from one assessment to the next, and copies of assessments showing scores and teacher comments about the student's strengths and areas of need. Work samples displayed by students showed teachers' use of task-specific rubrics to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines. A work sample in a grade 4 student's folder showed feedback via a rating of Level 3 on an attached four point rubric for math problem solving, with a next step advising the student to "use more than one model to prove the solution."

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 that 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, texts, essential understandings, embedded assessments, target vocabulary, skills, and strategies for guided and independent practice. Modules sequenced by topics and grades provide teachers with content from *Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project* curricula which offer Common Core-aligned tasks that incorporate English Language Arts standards and instructional shifts and infuse literacy based tasks across all content areas. 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 math instructional shifts. Pacing calendars aligned to the New York City scope and sequence guide instruction in social studies and science, with Full Option Science System (FOSS) resources supplementing science instruction at the upper grades.
- All curriculum maps illustrate targeted standards for each grade and sample tasks that address each standard, including requiring students to engage in activities such as composing explanations of inferences from texts, preparing summaries of reading selections, and writing on topics across content areas. A math pacing calendar outlines standards by grade and sample tasks for solving complex math problems. In addition to units of instruction for day to day core content, curricula include topics and skills related to college and career readiness, with exploratory learning tasks for service learning projects and enrichment activities crafted around the Renzulli model of school-wide enrichment clusters, embedded in units. Curricula for arts programs and partnerships with organizations such as New York City Ballet, Music and the Brain and PS Art, also provide exposure to college and career readiness activities. Web-based resources, including e-books and videos, further contribute to rigorous content and tasks for all learners across disciplines.
- Driven by a school-wide instructional focus on academic rigor, teachers create curriculum maps and unit plans that illustrate tasks designed for both enrichment and acceleration of students in all subgroups, across diverse ability levels in general education, self-contained and integrated classes. For all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, the use of visuals, sentence frames, manipulatives, and technology-based supports is embedded in lesson plans and units. Units also show that teachers incorporate tiered vocabulary, skills and unit goals tied to differentiated learning tasks. Each unit includes a culminating performance task and a Common Core-aligned rubric for assessing levels of student mastery of content and skills taught. The school is currently expanding curricula for an 8:1:1 *Horizon* instructional program, specially designed for an increasing number of children with autism, in three classes across grades K-2.

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 across the school. All staff members communicate and partner with families to support expectations for college and career readiness for all students.

Impact

Effective communication of and support for high expectations result in strong partnerships among staff and families and shared accountability for improving achievement by all staff and students.

Supporting Evidence

- During the teacher team meetings several teachers stated that the principal sets clear expectations for teaching and learning through an explicit school-wide instructional focus on academic rigor. Using a monthly calendar and weekly staff meetings and professional development sessions, school leaders provide all staff with information and supports, identifying learning targets and expectations for each week and reminding all staff of unit goals, classwork, homework and assessment needs for all grades and subjects. Teachers reported that they are held accountable for delivering high quality instruction linked to complex texts, use of academic vocabulary, high level discussions, close reading, effective questioning and discussion, formative assessments and meaningful feedback to students.
- All teachers receive ongoing professional development from school-based staff and consultants, including four teacher leaders, the Literacy/English as a Second Language coach, and an assistant principal, based on an analysis of their learning needs as well as the identified learning needs of all students whom they teach. Utilizing classroom observation data, school leaders work one to one with teachers to evaluate their progress based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and help unearth patterns of growth or decline in student achievement. Teachers receive training in analyzing performance tasks to evaluate and deepen the level of rigor based on an academic rigor rubric. Teachers also participate in peer inter-visitations focused on academic rigor, student engagement, questioning and discussion strategies and using assessment in Instruction. Observation reports show that school leaders provide specific, timely and actionable feedback addressing these elements of teacher practice. Both teachers and school leaders reported improvement in teacher practice and student achievement as a result of these activities.
- A parent engagement team of teachers prepares and disseminates the *Elm Ave Journal*, a newsletter that keeps families informed about curricula, tasks and goals for their children and offers them strategies and tips for supporting their children's learning at home. The team also plans and coordinates parent workshops and oversees the distribution of mid-term student progress reports for families. Through weekly family engagement activities, including English as a Second Language, music and arts classes and grade specific workshops in English Language Arts and math, school staff partners with families to accelerate student progress towards learning goals. During the meeting with families, they noted that the staff helps them to prepare their children for the next grade, by inviting them to classrooms and constantly reaching out to them via text messages, phone calls and emails. Three parents of students with disabilities tearfully expressed their amazement at and gratitude for the academic and social growth of their children as a result of support and interventions provided to both them and their children by school staff.

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 for improving 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 extensive teamwork teachers regularly reflect on their pedagogy and play an integral role in key decisions that improve teacher capacity and student outcomes across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers have seven preparation periods per week, with classroom teachers having two consecutive periods that they use for extended activities with peers on teams or with partners from Teachers College. Additionally, classroom teachers are programmed for daily common planning periods with peers on their grade. Teachers of English Language Learners and students with disabilities meet with each other at least one period per week and with teachers of students in the grades they service for a separate period of common planning. They engage in collaborative inquiry to further align units of study to reflect integration of Common Core Standards, with specific focus on close reading, text complexity, academic vocabulary, math discussions and academic rigor across the curriculum. The principal credits teamwork for the levels of growth in teacher pedagogy as seen on *Advance* data reports and ongoing improvement in student achievement, as per running records and English Language Arts and math performance task data.
- During the Quality Review, a grade 3 teacher team analyzed samples of student writing at three levels of proficiency (high, medium and low) based on students’ responses to a performance task linked to nonfiction selections about the dangers of playing football. Teachers identified the weaknesses and strengths of the work as related to criteria for mastery of the standard and skills being assessed. Participants responded to questions such as: What skills are evident in the work sample? How does the response differ across the three performance levels? What are strategies for advancing each student to the next level? What does the teacher need to re-teach? A lead presenter guided the flow of conversation and a recorder used a graphic organizer to record the ideas generated.
- The school utilizes teacher leaders across a variety of teams representing all content areas, including the arts, to facilitate inquiry based activities within weekly teacher team meetings. Team leaders work directly with other teachers, framing school goals, implementing school-wide protocols and developing curricula and instructional initiatives. In addition to grade teams that collaboratively work on curricula, instruction and assessment, there is an instructional/professional development team that focuses on academic policies and professional development plans. The principal noted that members of this team were integral to the selection of a new Common Core-aligned math program and approved the school-wide grading policy. A service learning team creates units of study for projects that students engage in across the school, while an intervention team tracks and implements interventions for students that teachers refer for evaluation, and a parent engagement team plans and coordinates activities for home-school partnerships.