



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 236 Mill Basin

Elementary School K236

**6302 Avenue U
Brooklyn
NY 11234**

Principal: Salil Paingankar

**Date of review: February 23, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

The School Context

P.S. 236 Mill Basin is an elementary school with 581 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 10% Asian, 23% Black, 12% Hispanic, and 51% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 12% 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 95.2%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Celebration	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:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Assessments are aligned with the curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessments to accurately track progress and make adjustments to curriculum and instruction.

Impact

Assessment practices provide meaningful feedback to students and teachers so that all students demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- The school administers beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year assessments in all content areas, *Fountas and Pinnell* reading assessments, content-based performance tasks, *GO Math!* chapter and unit assessments, *ReadyGen* unit assessments, on-demand writing assessments, word study unit assessments, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), and teacher-created assessments. Teachers organize assessment data by question and skill and create strategic plans for student improvement based on individual and group performance data trends.
- Teachers reviewed item skills analysis charts of 2014-2015 New York State assessment performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and math to identify areas of student mastery and need, identifying trends to select topics to revisit in the fall. During an inquiry team meeting, kindergarten teachers examined performance tasks and identified skills related to writing conventions and organization as areas of need. Teachers looked specifically at student performance at Levels 2 and 3 to identify skills needed to move performance to Levels 3 and 4.
- Kindergarten teachers shared that the *ReadyGen* assessment and rubric for narrative writing was not capturing writing conventions. Teachers made adjustments to the rubric to assess spacing, capitalization, and punctuation and made adjustments to instruction to include additional mini-lessons on these skills. The team also decided to bring smaller versions of the conventions anchor charts in a checklist format to the student tables so that students could use them as a self-assessment while writing. In addition, teachers planned to create and administer an additional writing conventions post-assessment.
- Based on assessment data, teachers make regular adjustments that have included adding additional performance-based assessments and additional tasks, and introduction of higher level and content-based vocabulary. Teachers increased the number of on-demand text-based writing performance tasks to enhance the *ReadyGen* curriculum. Student proficiency, including proficiency of English Language Learners and students with disabilities, has improved in ELA and math based on the 2014 and 2015 New York State assessments. Students scoring proficient increased from 52.6% to 57.1% in ELA and from 58.8% to 66.9% in math.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms questioning and scaffolds consistently provide multiple entry points for all learners. Some classrooms also provide high quality supports and extensions.

Impact

Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation, however the limited use of high quality supports and extensions hinders all students' in taking ownership of their learning experience.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teachers used questioning to push student thinking. During a math lesson the teacher prompted a student with questions to help him understand when to regroup in division. The teacher asked, "What should happen when you divide?", "How come you can't divide?", "What can you do then?", and "How is it different now?" The teacher allowed time for the student to think and respond. The student answered each question and came to a decision, "I have to regroup...exchange for 18 tens."
- In an ELA classroom, the teacher provided all students with guidelines for literature circle discussions, ideas for responding to texts, and for each group member, roles such as discussion director, question finder, vocabulary enricher, cool connector, story summarizer, artful artist, and vivid visualizer. Each student could explain their role in their own words, and prepared text-based questions for their classmates who responded to questions using text evidence. One student asked, "On page 49, how do you think Ben felt when he let Fella go?" Students shared that the questions have to be "challenging" and that they let their classmates know when their questions are too easy. However, the level of high quality supports in this classroom, which allowed students to take ownership of their learning, was not present in some classrooms visited. For example, during a social studies lesson on symbols of the United States the teacher did not model, provide guided practice or opportunities for discussion. Students within groups incorrectly identified symbols of the United States and were not provided the opportunity to discuss their choices or compare their selections with members of their group.
- Grade 4 students in an ELA classroom participated in a Socratic seminar answering the question, "Are you for or against zoos?" Students debated the question using evidence from previously conducted research on zoos, aquariums, and sea parks. Students on the outer circle took notes using a Socratic Seminar observation checklist. During the debate, students shared that animals facing extinction need zoos to preserve their species. Other students responded that there are animal sanctuaries that protect animals from extinction. One student responded, "It says in the article that it is the exact opposite for giraffes. They are not almost extinct and they are in every zoo." Seminar participants defended their opinions with evidence and student observers shared their assessments of the quality of the discussion. The teacher supported a high level of student thinking and discussion in this classroom by providing guidelines and roles for all participants. The high level of discussion and ownership present in this classroom was not present across all classrooms visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

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

Impact

Purposeful decisions build coherence, promote college and career readiness and ensure that a diversity of students have access to curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards in all content areas. Curricula includes: *ReadyGen*, *GO Math*, *Houghton Mifflin* social studies, *Science Fusion* and a Science Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEAM) program. There is a school focus on curriculum mapping and teachers continuously revise and enhance curricula to align the scope and sequence with the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts in ELA and math. Teachers have revised curricula to support the school focus on the instructional shifts of fluency in math and student engagement in rich evidence-based discussions about text.
- Across grades and subjects, lesson plans include learning objectives, essential questions, academic vocabulary, and tasks that engage students in evidence-based discussions. Tasks include turn and talk, stop and jot, small group discussions, shared writing, group problem solving activities, Socratic seminar, and debate.
- School leaders and faculty decided not to use the pre-packaged *ReadyGen* workbooks. They crafted their own *ReadyGen* curriculum maps for all grades, and created their own curriculum template to ensure inclusion of key components across all content area maps. Teachers in ELA, math, science, social studies, art, physical education, and dance utilize this template. The template includes essential understandings, essential questions, Common Core Learning Standards, vocabulary, assessments, and supplemental materials and strategies for Universal Design for Learning (UDL), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Revisions to curricula include a variety of differentiation strategies from UDL and RTI. The curriculum recommends these strategies to support English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and at-risk students. The curriculum does not designate which strategies are most effective with students in each of the subgroups or recommend strategies for the highest achieving students.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training to support achievement of expectations. Teacher teams and staff systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations and provide guidance.

Impact

A culture of mutual accountability supports high expectations and support so that students are prepared for their next level of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate expectations to faculty and staff during Monday professional development sessions and instructional cabinet meetings, through school circulars and memos highlighting instructional walkthrough observations noting glows, grows and instructional next steps, and through a school document titled, “Provider’s Corner” which offers weekly tips on instructional strategies. Recommended strategies are aligned to the school-wide foci on questioning and discussion and assessment during instruction, 3b and 3d on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. To support the foci leadership has organized Learning Partners within the school community and inter-visitations with neighboring schools to observe and turnkey best practices around Socratic Seminar, questioning and discussion and data driven instruction.
- Teachers hold each other accountable for deliverables on grade and content teams. All teachers select learning partners. Learning partners visit each other’s classrooms to provide support and guidance on the school-wide instructional focus on planning and questioning. Teachers observe and provide feedback on teacher and student questioning, accountable talk, turn and talk, small group discussions, and assessment. Learning partners complete a self-assessment after each visit that includes instructional take-aways and next steps for instruction. For example, reflection log cited the TAG (Tell, Ask, and Give) peer conferencing tool used to support discussion, noting, “The TAG acronym will remind students how to give feedback related to writing. It will begin the process of conversation by helping them understand, respond, and accept their partner’s constructive criticism.”
- The school has organized grade 4 and 5 by department to transition students to the rigor and scheduling of middle school. Students receive core instruction from content specialists and travel from class to class. Grade 5 students receive support in completing the middle school application process. Staff members support students in selecting appropriate schools and give students guidance on “making a good choice”. The vast majority of students interviewed said that they receive feedback on their work in the form of a rubric, teacher written note, or in one-on-one conferences. Students were able to articulate their next steps for learning with the support of teacher feedback. A grade 5 student received a 2 on an ELA assessment and explained that based on the feedback, next time he will reread to find key details and take out the “fluffy” details not connected to the main idea. He also added that he would identify the main idea and support it “feelings and actions.” A grade 3 student noted that she did not read the math problem carefully. Based on the feedback, next time she will check her work and underline key words in the question prompt.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Teachers systematically analyze key elements of teacher and student work.

Impact

Collaboration has resulted in instructional coherence, strengthened teacher capacity, and increased student achievement and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams include grade level, special education, and new teacher teams as well as a vertical instructional cabinet. Teachers meet weekly to plan, update curriculum, and analyze student and teacher work. Teacher learning partners also provide each other with consistent instructional support and feedback and hold each other accountable for the implementation of recommendations. Teachers complete reflection logs after each visit to a colleagues' classroom. Logs identify a selected school-wide instructional focus and provide suggestions to improve instruction, and strategies to implement suggestions based on practices observed in colleagues' classrooms. The vast majority of reflection logs reviewed for the months of January, February, and March focused on domain 3d, assessment during instruction, as agreed upon for the winter cycle. One log recommends the use of wipe-off work mats for students to use during guided math practice and self-checklists students can use to assess their own work when working independently.
- The principal shared that teacher capacity to plan from student data has improved and teachers are having more effective conversations about instruction that is informed by analysis of student work. A grade 5 teacher shared that she has adopted the "traffic light" assessment practice shared by an early grade teacher. The teacher shared that the use of the traffic light cards allows real time checks for understanding. A kindergarten teacher shared that she has incorporated exit tickets into her lessons as a way of assessing comprehension and preparing for the next day's lesson. During vertical team meetings teachers discuss the academic needs of students at each grade level and develop ways to support those needs as student move across grades and content areas. Teachers shared that they discuss "what skills look like as students move across the grades." Teachers also shared that sitting on vertical teams allows teachers to "know the students coming up" and "understand their needs at each grade level".
- Grade teams analyze student data and conduct inquiries to identify next steps for students and instruction. The kindergarten team analyzed student writing and developed next steps for groups of students which included elongating sentences by adding detail and descriptive language, creating a "drawing rubric" with an exemplar, and adding journal writing to the daily routine to get students writing more often.
- The school has demonstrated student growth for the past two years. The median adjusted growth percentile for English Language Arts increased from 0% in 2013 to 32% in 2014 and 57% in 2015. The median adjusted growth percentile for math increased from 0% in 2013 to 25% in 2014 and 55% in 2015.