

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 251 Paerdegat

Elementary School K251

**1037 East 54th Street
Brooklyn
NY 11234**

Principal: Sheldon Noel

**Date of review: January 6, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Anne Alfonso**

The School Context

P.S. 251 Paerdegat is an elementary school with 595 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 77% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 5% White students. The student body includes 6% English Language Learners and 17% 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 93.0%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Proficient
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers are aware of and understand the school leader's expectations around teaching and learning. Families understand student progress towards meeting the standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations to the staff through an administrative handbook that is distributed at the beginning of the school year. As evidenced in the stated P.S. 251 instructional focus, a detailed outline of the instructional components of lesson plans and the workshop model are provided to all members of the school community. The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* supports targeted professional development to improve instructional practice, with an emphasis on development of instructional goals with a focus on text-based discussions.
- To support improved student outcomes, school leaders created a comprehensive *Advance* spreadsheet to monitor improved teacher pedagogy. During the individual planning conference, teachers identified areas of strengths and weaknesses in their professional practice. Subsequent feedback provides next steps in alignment with expectations for student learning and teachers' professional learning plan. Teachers participate in professional learning through modeling, inter-visitation, coaching, and mentoring.
- In an effort to keep families informed of their child's progress, the school provides families with *Fountas and Pinnell* Benchmark progress reports three times a year and results of end-of-unit math assessments. In addition, the school informs parents of what their children are learning and how they are performing through a website, the *Class DoJo*. Parents attend a Meet the Teacher Night to learn the expectations of the grade for their children and receive a parent guide. Families also receive a monthly grade newsletter highlighting what students are learning in the content areas. Parents are connected to learning supports through online resources such as *Raz Kids*, *Awards Read*, and *Reading A-Z* to support their children's progress. The parent coordinator provides workshops to help parents understand Common Core Learning, assessments, and middle school applications. Parents attended a *Great Leaps* training to help them to assist students in reading with fluency. Parents have expressed their appreciation of the school's open door policy and Tuesday afternoon to meet with them.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher pedagogy is centered on a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Multiple points of entry and scaffolds are consistently provided to support students' diverse learning needs, but are not always strategic.

Impact

Across classrooms, many students demonstrate higher-order thinking through text-based discussions, and consistently demonstrate high levels of thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus to engage students in text-based accountable talk discussions to deepen their thinking and learning is embedded in pedagogy through common beliefs of teaching and learning based on the analysis of data. Across classrooms visited, teachers were observed during one of the workshop model components by either providing a mini lesson, working with students in guided practice, or having students work on tasks to demonstrate their understanding of the content. Students worked through differentiated tasks utilizing scaffolds to participate in independent, partner, or group work. For example, in a third grade self-contained class, students actively participated in the math discussion through the use of scaffolds, such as underlining and circling, to unlock the problem, the thinking, and the solution. Students used the SMARTboard to demonstrate learning and engage in text-based conversation.
- During classroom visits, students were provided with scaffolds such as guiding questions, charts for nonfiction, accountable talk stems/prompts on the desks, leveled texts, math manipulatives, and tiered tasks to engage and allow for the completion of the assigned task. In a fifth grade math classroom, after the completion of the mini lesson, students were assessed, grouped, and worked independently. During the discussion, students participated by using prompts and responding to the question, "What are we noticing about the powers of 10?" The teacher supported students in their learning as they worked in groups and completed the tasks. In a fourth grade science class, students were actively engaged in the completion and recording of an experiment to measure the volume of an irregular solid. As the teacher circulated she questioned what they noticed and what they wondered. Student discussion surfaced misconceptions regarding the difference between floating and getting stuck. During the experiment students explained and completed their charts. However, the charts did not support hypothesis thinking by the students.
- With a focus on critical thinking through text-based discussion, teachers across classrooms were observed providing time for students to actively engage in partnerships or small groups. For example, in a fifth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were engaged in partnerships throughout the mini lesson, and in guided and independent practice. Students had opportunities to use text-based evidence to support their discussion. In a grade two math lesson, the students were grouped and practiced two-digit addition with and without regrouping. A group of students were provided with an enrichment component to the lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school effectively aligns its curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and ensures the incorporation of the instructional shifts. Teachers utilize student work and data to plan and refine curricular and academic tasks.

Impact

Curricular decisions have allowed for coherence across the grades and a focus on college and career readiness skills. The planning and refinement of units and academic tasks based on students' specific needs has provided all learners access to the curriculum.

Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans and teachers' lesson plans are aligned to specific Common Core Standards and include essential questions, assessments, and differentiated tasks, which include scaffolds based on students' needs. Across all content areas and grades, teachers' plans reflect components of the workshop model where the mini lesson, guided practice and independent or group tasks guide student thinking and interaction. All plans reflect exposure to the instructional shifts such as text-based answers and a deep understanding in math. For example, a fifth grade ICT class lesson plan requires students to use context clues and refer to the text to determine the meaning of vocabulary words, and to provide evidence to support identification of the main idea.
- The school has adjusted the curricula to support literacy for grades K-2 and 3-5 based on analysis of last year's English Language Arts (ELA) exam and other formative assessments such as the Primary Literacy Assessments and the Periodic Assessments. Adjustments to the K-2 literacy curriculum included an increase of modeling and thinking-aloud strategies through shared reading, an increased focus on early writing skills and standards through writing workshop, and increased phonics and phonemic awareness instruction through nursery rhymes and poetry. It was determined that the workshop model as well as close reading would be the components for the literacy program.
- Unit plans for math and ELA across grades have been adjusted to include specific English Language Learner (ELL) strategies such as language objectives, modeling language, eliciting prior knowledge, and rephrasing.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessments	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers are using and creating assessments, rubrics, and grading policies aligned to the school's curricula. Common assessments are used to track student progress towards goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

Students and teachers have actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Assessment results inform curricula and instructional adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes various assessments such as *Fountas and Pinnell* benchmark assessments in K-5 three times per year, baseline and mid-year Periodic Assessments, pre- and post-unit assessments, as well as end-of-unit writing performance based assessments aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, the school utilizes online *RAZ Kids*, and *Reading A-Z* to support and track reading levels and progress
- Teachers provide feedback to students through conversations, through reading and writing conferences, and in written comments that include next steps on rubric-evaluated student work. Feedback was evident within student portfolios and on classroom and hallway bulletin boards. Students shared several writing pieces with feedback as well as subject-based rubrics. For example, feedback on a fifth grader's writing piece stated, "Clear beginning, middle, and end. Make sure to use correct verb tenses. Also, put quotation marks around character's dialogue each time."
- Using the *Primary Literacy Assessments*, teachers assessed literacy development for grades K-2 and adjusted the curriculum to include the components of balanced literacy three days a week, adding Teachers' College units of study in writing, and *Foundations* for phonics and orthography. An analysis of ELL periodic assessments led to the addition of scaffolds and strategies supported through teacher facilitated workshops and inter-visitations. In addition, *Award Reading* was purchased to support additional learning and growth for ELLs.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote schools goals and Common Core implementation. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teacher collaboration has resulted in the strengthening of teachers’ instructional capacity and improved student learning. Teachers have a key voice in decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- During an observation of a fourth grade team meeting, teachers began the meeting with a review of their observations from holiday packets and research projects. Teachers concluded that using excerpts of texts would support differentiation for students not able to read the whole text, and that additional support for text-based evidence in writing would be a focus. Teachers continued the meeting by reviewing student work from the *GO Math!* inventory for basic multiplication. Teachers also concluded that they might limit the number of strategies for students to use for multiplication. They revised the curriculum and moved the study of factors following chapter one to the unit before multiplication. Also, teachers noticed that students were having difficulty with the required writing for the end-of-unit math assessments and concluded that they would continue to focus on students using math language and structure in math journals. Additionally, they agreed to continue focus on basic skills and provide a workshop for parents’ support of their children’s learning.
- The school schedule provides common planning time for grade teams to meeting regularly. The structure for grade leaders supports their role in setting the agenda and facilitating the meetings. They regularly attend a formal grade leader conference with school leaders. They share next steps and curricular adjustments based on findings and student learning gaps. Teachers have been influential in key decisions such as the increased use of the workshop model, the use of the Teacher’s College units of study for writing, and teacher walks for improved student learning across the school.
- Teacher team structures also provide distributive leadership opportunities for teachers to serve as team leaders, ambassadors with partner schools, and facilitators for professional learning. School structures include common preparation periods, flexible scheduling, and both Monday and off site professional development. Teacher-facilitated workshops included Balanced Literacy Planning, Data Feedback, Understanding ELLs, and Reading for Struggling Readers.