



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 256 Benjamin Banneker

Elementary School K256

**114 Kosciusko Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216**

Principal: Sharyn Hemphill

**Date of review: January 26, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

The School Context

P.S. 256 Benjamin Banneker is an elementary school with 294 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 69% Black, 27% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 9% English Language Learners and 15% 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 88.2%.

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	Developing
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 the entire staff. The school leaders and staff communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

The school's staff is provided training and has a system of accountability for the expectations. School leaders and staff help families understand student progress toward set expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The faculty handbook that is given to each staff member addresses the school's mission statement, motto, and school-wide focus of designing and implementing more rigorous and cognitively engaging tasks. It clearly outlines expectations regarding instruction, curriculum, lesson plans, and student assessment. Teachers are also provided a weekly schedule for all subjects/content areas that breakdowns the daily expectations. For example, Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday there is to be a reading workshop, writing workshop, math workshop, word/vocabulary study, Close reading of text, and small group and inquiry based work in social studies and science. Also included on the schedule are times designated for staff development, communicating with parents, and teacher grade team meetings.
- The school's administration and staff communicate with parents during designated parent conference engagement time on Tuesdays, and via notices, newsletters, emails, and phone calls, along with providing progress reports and report cards when suitable. For example, a notice sent to parents in September addressed the following topics, College and Career Readiness at the Elementary Level, Academic and Personal Behaviors, homework expectations, class projects, rubrics, and the impact of student attendance on student learning.
- Staff also receives memos and weekly professional development training that further reinforces set expectations. The school leaders conduct both formal and informal observations, providing feedback that addresses how critical thinking is promoted in the classroom through the effective use of questioning and discussion techniques.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and are beginning to reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn. However, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* and instructional shifts. Teaching strategies lead to students' uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills in their work.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers' lessons reflect instructional shifts including text-based answers, writing from sources, and academic vocabulary. For example, students in a grade 4 class were completing a writing assignment and were to use text-based evidence to help write a summary of what they read. In a grade 3 class, the students were working on a literary essay, gathering evidence from two stories to identify similarities.
- Teaching strategies provided some multiple entry points, differentiation, and scaffolds for students. In a kindergarten class, students were grouped and assigned tasks based on their level, with guided practice by the teacher. Similarly, in a grade 4 reading workshop lesson, students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities were grouped into three levels, below, approaching, and on-level readers. However, in the other classes there was little differentiation observed.
- Although present in the curriculum, teaching strategies presented inconsistencies in higher order thinking questions, student work products, and the belief that students are to be cognitively engaged with academic tasks. In a grade 5 Reader's Workshop lesson, there was little evidence of teacher questioning. In a grade 3 lesson, most questions presented were to recall facts, such as "What did the character want?", and "Who were the people?" In a science class, the questions included, "Which sound is higher?", and "Why do bats use echo location?"

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

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

Impact

The school's curricula and academic tasks promote college and career readiness and a diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the *EngageNY* Math program, NYS Scope and Sequence for science and social studies, and Teachers' College Reading and Writing Project Curricula. The school also uses the Common Core-aligned Number Talks math program to further reinforce critical thinking and number sense skills. The school's leadership, along with two staff developers, works with staff to further align the chosen curricula with the standards.
- The school's unit plan templates target Common Core Standards and addresses student access and engagement with essential questions, teaching points, guided practice, accountable talk, independent practice, exemplars, academic vocabulary, assessments, and deliberate planning to address all students. Based on student data, a weekly plan was designed to better address the needs of those students struggling in writing. The teacher planned specific skills to teach around writing to small groups of students.
- Student data also informed the refinement of the math curricula. Staff identified challenges with some students accurately solving word problems. As a result, teachers were more explicit with the steps involved needed to solve the presented problems, with a defined focus on the skill of "grouping."

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses exit tickets, rubrics, NYS math practice exams, mid- and end-module assessments in math, Measures of Student Learning, and interim assessments, to assess student performance. The information gathered is infused and spiraled into future lessons so that student needs are addressed. For example, data for upper grade students revealed they were stagnant in reading while the lower grades showed growth. As a result, the teachers in the upper grades added additional time in the curricula documents to focus on the writing units.
- Teachers use information gathered from exit tickets as an opener to the next day's lesson. Checklists and rubrics are also used as a means of measuring student outcomes and for providing feedback. For example, a grade 5 rubric for opinion writing offers the following feedback, "good use of transition words to connect evidence back to reasons, work on your conclusion to connect back to what text is mainly about."
- Based on the review of an assessment spreadsheet, teachers are analyzing and tracking data for the students they teach. For example, for a grade 4 mid-module math assessment task administered in January, teachers captured assessment results for each student that included item analysis and which students answered correctly or incorrectly. Teachers then used this information as a part of their reteach plans, making adjustments to lessons that were previously taught, by providing exemplars for operations and algebraic thinking. Staff also captures student outcomes with a student progress performance profile, which monitors whether students are above, on, or below, in specific skill areas such as identifying central ideas or themes in texts and reading and analyzing informational/explanatory texts.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or whom they are focused.

Impact

The inquiry-based collaborations strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers, typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The grade teams at each level from kindergarten to grade 5 each address the major content areas. Each team has a curriculum leader that facilitates the professional collaboration meeting time.
- Grade level teacher teams meet during common planning time, analyzing and discussing student data, resulting in adjustments to curricula. A grade one team meeting agenda addressed math module 3 to determine what concepts were covered, what are the most crucial parts of the module, and what materials are needed to facilitate future instruction and lessons. As a part of the inquiry process, the team examined exemplars to determine what the students can do as of now, what they need to re-teach, and when the post-test should be administered.
- Based on data analysis during a team meeting, teachers indicated that reading data at the lower grades revealed that students are experiencing difficulty with beginning sounds and retelling stories. In response, teachers provide small group instruction on particular skills. The school also utilizes data from the computerized, Essential Skills reading program. This program identifies specific deficits in targeted skills such as grammar, sight words, and overall reading comprehension. The data is then used to inform future instructional decisions. For example, teachers provide more practice with the actual parts of speech and reassess skills via the computer adaptive activities.
- Teachers articulated that the collaborations allow them to work closely with colleagues to prepare and plan lessons, discuss what aspects of previous lessons went well or not so well, and to share best practices for re-teaching. They stated that the team structure helps them to adjust future lessons and to identify trends in student work.