



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 277 Gerritsen Beach

Elementary School K277

**2529 Gerritsen Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11229**

Principal: Jeanne Fish

**Date of review: February 5, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

P.S. 277 Gerritsen Beach is an elementary school with 443 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 3% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 76% White students. The student body includes 6% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.4%.

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	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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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 that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data and student work.

Impact

Inquiry practices have resulted in school-wide instructional coherence while increasing student achievement for all learners and brought about improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Collaborative inquiry teams exist for each grade level from kindergarten through grade 5, in addition to a vertical team consisting of representatives from all grades. An observation of grade 4 teachers demonstrated how they have a focused agenda to analyze student work and share teaching practices. The focus of this meeting was to analyze student work samples and identify teaching practices related to using remainders in problem solving. Analysis of student work samples were conducted by teachers using worksheets and revealed strengths among students, including the use of images and charts as well as weaknesses related primarily to understanding the question. Each teacher recorded observations about areas of concerns including the labeling of work, neatness, and students not having a clear understanding of the problem. Finally, teachers identified implications for instruction in terms of where they could add scaffolds with steps, where more manipulatives could be used, and provide more concrete examples in class. At the conclusion of the meeting, all teachers agreed to incorporate more reading strategies to improve their teaching practice and develop clear next steps for groups of students with similar areas of concern.
- A review of English Language Arts performance assessment task trends across the grades identified some areas for improvement common to student work in each grade. Teachers used that information to plan a focus for the next cycle of inquiry and how they would address those trends through instruction via next steps. Grade 3 teachers plan to focus on the “use of transition words to connect ideas and summarizing in their final paragraph.” The teachers will address these trends by “exposing children to more informational text and using a checklist to be sure all the parts of the task are completed.” In kindergarten, all teachers’ next cycle of learning is to focus on their students “working on forming simple sentences” through the use of the adopted curriculum resource *Foundations*, modeling, and providing a writer’s checklist.
- Teacher teams systematically analyze assessment results throughout the year, including during the spring, summer and on weekends. Analysis includes staff identifying gaps in instruction that helps them determine effective adjustments to lessons during and after school. Additionally, a student who works with her core content teacher and a different team teacher on weekends grew from a failing benchmark assessment result to a 96% on a mid-year assessment. She attributed her growth to “her teachers working together.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Additionally, teacher assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to teachers and students regarding their achievement. Additionally, teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs, despite feedback sometimes not being presented in a meaningful manner and not always helping students to be aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics, checklists, self-assessment forms, and grading policies have been established in many classes for use on projects, assessments, and in-class assignments, however in several classrooms observed students were unclear about how to use the tools to identify their next steps. During a math lesson, several students expressed they had only used the rubric in the prior day's lesson and were unsure how to define certain vocabulary words on the rubric and evaluate themselves properly. A social studies classroom lesson required students to evaluate their peer's presentation on a scale of one to four, yet some students appeared confused as to how to complete the assessment forms; several students checked boxes while others wrote a numerical score in the space provided. In most cases, however, the students did add additional details and written notes to support their assessment. In another social studies classroom visited, students debated the ethics of keeping animals in zoos and were provided rubrics, although students were not observed referring to the rubric.
- Students were able to provide samples of how they used rubrics and feedback from their teachers, although the quality of meaningful feedback was not consistently high. One grade 5 student shared how the feedback helped her to understand how she could add more details and "organize [her] events better," but shared more about her "need to slow [her] writing down," according to the teacher. Two students, including one classified as a student with disabilities, explained although they got all 3s on their assignment according to the rubrics graded by their teacher, they could not explain what they had to do to improve to a level 4.
- Classroom assessments are created by teachers several times a year to inform teachers of their students' progress on reading. Teachers use the information to plan lessons, reorganize small groups of students and work on trends. Throughout most classes, students were unable to communicate or explain their awareness of the connection between their assessments and the groupings in their classes and assignments.
- Teachers use Developmental Reading Assessments (DRAs) to collect formative information regarding students' ability to read in phrases, self-correct, problem solve unknown words, use vocabulary from text and make thoughtful connections. However, many of the reviewed documents did not have all the information needed to fully assess an individual's level and identify appropriate next steps.

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 and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Additionally, curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

College and career readiness for all students is promoted and built coherently in curricula so that a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks, which are cognitively engaging.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum mapping and planning documents highlight reading strategies for all grades on summary sheets. The reflection sheets provide information for teachers to incorporate strategies that support students making connections and using visualization and inferencing. A grade 4 visualization/inferencing teaching approach identified included using authentic texts displayed on PowerPoint presentations, introducing coding the text as a strategy, and providing more explicit instruction. An intended learning outcome to increase cognitive engagement is that students will make stronger text-based inferences in their writing and be able to identify specific details to support their ideas.
- Documents about strategic problem solving in math reveal successes and challenges across all grades with suggestions for implementation in classes based on a review of student work and data that integrate core beliefs about how students learn best. Additional documents highlight school-wide math initiatives emphasizing how Common Core Learning Standards in math should be applied to real world applications.
- Trends based on alignment of Common Core Learning Standards across the school are identified by teacher teams for each grade in English Language Arts by strength, weakness, and instructional shift. Teachers reflect upon these trends several times a year. A review of a document for all grades comparing trends from October to January revealed skills necessary for college and career readiness being addressed and implemented purposefully to engage students cognitively in their work. An example includes kindergarten students being able to form simple sentences in October and by January being able to identify sentence structure and development.
- English as a New Language lesson planning documents include various opportunities for students to access to the curricula and be engaged. Samples include provisions for deconstructing the text, where students take the text apart for better understanding. Additional plans include some students using colored boxes and underlining to annotate their document, while others are provided a graphic organizer. Similar strategies are planned for students defining complex vocabulary words that are introduced to them from the text. Scaffolds include identifying a definition, sentence, synonym and/or picture based on the provided organizer.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best and include high levels of student work products and discussions.

Impact

Students learn best by instruction that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional shifts where students demonstrate high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- A rigorous focus on vocabulary is found throughout most classrooms including students being asked to include challenging vocabulary in their group discussions with one another and direct response to questions asked by the teacher. During a grade 4 English Language Arts lesson, the teacher asked the class if anyone could find an appropriate character trait that relates to what the character is thinking. Students engaged in small group discussions using the text to support their answer and identify a character trait. One student stated he felt the character was dutiful, although he was challenged by the teacher and his peers to find a better word. Another student suggested arrogant, which was agreed by most students as the best choice. Additionally, the classroom had an interactive word wall with students' names and definitions of key words. In other classes, students generated vocabulary workbooks that include various approaches to representing a word's definition such as flip charts, pictures, colored images and graphic organizers.
- In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were purposefully grouped with one of the two teachers or paraprofessionals in the room working on various reading assignments for more intimate participation and were given various scaffolds to demonstrate their knowledge. In all four groups, students were asked questions about their reading that required them to demonstrate their thinking. When some students struggled reading the words the teacher would help them decode it through questioning, using their finger as a guide, or highlighting various parts of the word that were distinguishable. In another ICT class, students were given various forms following a group introduction to the "1, 2, 3's of writing an introduction." The graphic organizer included hints, sentence starters, and fill-ins to permit high levels of student thinking and participation for all learners.
- During a science lesson, students were provided materials and tasks to complete based on verbal procedure expectations. Some choice was presented to students although the depth of the task did not clearly define how the students were to further their explanation to ensure their voice was captured in their data and notes. In many classes, students were expected to collect information on their thinking process and communicate it whether in writing or among their partner(s). Students in a social studies class debated the ethics of keeping animals in zoos and were able to speak their findings while the whole class listened, and some were able to plan a rebuttal to further the high level of student thinking.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and a path that is connected to college and career readiness. School leaders also offer ongoing feedback to the entire staff, with training, and provide guidance to families.

Impact

A system of accountability towards high expectations has been established, which also provides families an understanding of student progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The leadership has established a tradition in their school to meet each year and look ahead while reflecting back about recently adopted practices and what they have accomplished thus far. The tradition consists of a Saturday planning event where deliberate decisions are made to “attain success for ourselves and our students.” During the most recent planning event day, staff engaged in aligning the math curricula, discussing what it means to have a responsive classroom, planning poetry units by grade levels, developing continued reading strategies, creating sight word centers, and reflecting on the day.
- High expectations are communicated to staff through a variety of ways including the monthly school spirit assemblies, which require students to demonstrate college and career readiness skills. During a visit to one of the assemblies students presented both physically and orally aspects of Brooklyn to a full audience of families and friends. Students demonstrated poise and knowledge of their content through having memorized all their lines and roles. Additionally, students with perfect attendance receive an award and are recognized by the principal for their accountability in attending school regularly for success.
- All staff are part of either a vertical or grade level team to ensure constant communication of expectations throughout the school curricula. Additional expectations for the vertical team members exist such that they communicate coherent instructional focus to all staff and facilitate in rolling out initiatives.
- Parents participate in school workshops and “appreciate the preparation the school does for [their] child” as exemplified by the reassignment of students to different teachers following the administration of the New York State assessments in the final months of their child’s grade 5 year. Additionally, parents communicated they feel the high expectations and level of rigor is “very challenging, but not too challenging.” Several parents of students with disabilities felt strongly that the school does not “dumb down” the curriculum and makes sure their child is held to the exact same expectations as all the students do. One parents was specifically pleased with the “level of [her] son’s Common Core Learning Standards on the New York State math assessment,” noting the teachers “go the extra mile” to support and challenge their children.