



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Fresh Creek School

Elementary School K325

**875 Williams Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Jacquelin Danvers-Coombs

**Date of review: May 3, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

The Fresh Creek School is an elementary school with 254 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 74% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.5%.

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	Additional Findings	Developing
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	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations for learning to all staff members and students' families and provide supports to help them work with students to meet the expectations.

Impact

Ongoing communication of and support for high expectations for teaching and learning foster accountability for improved achievement by staff and students. Regular communication with families promotes their understanding of student progress in meeting the high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders set clear expectations for learning and support all teachers towards success in meeting or exceeding the expectations through school-based professional learning activities, inter-visitations, and offsite professional learning opportunities. The staff support team includes a few teacher leaders, a literacy coach, a math coach, and consultants from Turnaround for Children and Generation Ready, all of whom collaborate with teachers and school leaders to strengthen instructional practices across the school. Teachers stated that the principal constantly reminds them of instructional expectations through a staff handbook, weekly memos, emails, and conversations at staff meetings. Teachers also reported that they turnkey learning to peers and work with each other in implementing best practices across content areas.
- The professional development plan indicates that all teachers receive ongoing training in planning and delivering rigorous instruction and implementing social-emotional learning initiatives. For example, teachers receive training in writing workshop practices, as part of ongoing integration of *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* (TCRWP) curricula in literacy-based tasks in English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science. Strategies for the successful implementation of Common Core-aligned math practices and a Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) program for building college and career readiness skills for students are also part of the professional development plan. Administrators use conference notes, classroom visits, reviews of unit and lesson plans, and analyses of student work to hold staff accountable for meeting all expectations.
- School leaders and staff provide families with information about high expectations for student learning through a parent/student handbook and workshops on topics such as Common Core Learning Standards, assessments, web-based resources for learning at home, and reading and homework strategies. Families also learn about high expectations for their children and strategies for helping their children through newsletters with overviews of curriculum and outreach activities on "Terrific Tuesdays." Parents indicated that they are kept abreast of their children's progress toward those expectations via interim progress reports, report cards, letters with reading levels, phone calls, texts, and *Class Dojo*, a website with class-specific information posted by some teachers. One parent added that families attended family literacy and math sessions, "Community Circle" meetings on Fridays, "Breakfast with the Principal," a Book o' Ween celebration, and career week activities, all of which reminded them of high expectations for their children.

Area of Focus

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

Teams of teachers participate in inquiry-based activities that are emerging across the school. Teacher leaders collaborate with school leaders to make decisions about school priorities.

Impact

Teacher teamwork is beginning to promote the achievement of school goals. Distributive leadership practices are creating opportunities for teacher participation in school-level decision-making.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers, who are members of a kindergarten through grade 2, grades 3 through 5 and/or a special education team, meet on Tuesdays and during weekly common planning periods to engage in professional learning with peers and/or with consultants who are part of the staff support team. In addition to the three teams designed to work collaboratively on curricula, instruction, and assessment, there are teams such as a Behavior Coordination Team and a Student Support Team that focus on academic and social-emotional learning support for at-risk students. The school leader indicated that administrators are working on identifying teacher leaders to consistently facilitate more inquiry-based professional learning events within weekly teacher team meetings as this is an area of “challenge” in the school.
- Teacher team members collaborate on activities such as designing interim assessments, analyzing student work and data, and using the Atlas Rubicon online curriculum mapping tool to create unit maps aligned to Common Core standards and instructional shifts. Teamwork is contributing to school goals such as the refinement of curricula for math and literacy and delivery of differentiated professional learning activities for all staff. However, teacher reflections on their instruction and intervention moves indicate that measures of the impact of the work of the teams on student achievement are not yet refined. Teams are focused on gathering additional data to assess the impact of strategies used to date.
- During the Quality Review, members of the kindergarten through grade 2 team examined student scores on a phonics-based task related to the last unit of instruction. There was a general discussion of the scores and characteristics of student responses as participants shared noticings, asked questions about the task, and generated ideas for their next unit. However, there was no copy of the task to guide an accurate assessment of student mastery of the skills involved. One participant asked, “Did the spelling words target all these skills on this chart?” It was also not clear what specific skills were an issue for each student and how interventions would be differentiated for students in each of the scoring categories shown on the report; the discussion was more focused on next steps for developing the upcoming unit than on the needs of individual students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and illustrate integration of instructional shifts. Teachers collaborate regularly to create demanding curricula and tasks for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

Ongoing alignment of curricula to relevant standards contributes to the development of academic tasks designed to deepen student thinking and learning in all content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum binders highlight grade-level curricula maps and lessons linked to pacing calendars that chart cross-discipline outcomes for writing, reading, listening, and speaking across classrooms and content areas. The binder includes units and tasks derived from modules of *TCRWP* curricula that offer Common Core-aligned tasks that incorporate ELA standards and instructional shifts and provide for the infusion of literacy-based tasks across all content areas. Pacing calendars aligned to the New York City scope and sequence resources guide instruction in science. Curriculum maps show use of curriculum resources such as *ReadyGen*, *GOMath!* and *EngageNY* for unit and task development across grades and content areas.
- Driven by a school-wide instructional focus on writing across content areas, teachers create unit plans that illustrate targeted standards for each grade. There are sample tasks that require 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 science task for grade 4 students required them to investigate the food chain by researching and describing the interactions between plants and animals in writing. In addition to units of instruction for day-to-day core content, curricula include topics and skills related to arts activities such as vocal instruction, reading music, and a strings program that allows students to explore clarinet, piano/keyboarding, and guitar playing skills. School curricula also include content for the PBIS program and enrichment activities to build college and career readiness for all students.
- Curricula incorporate specific instructional materials and strategies for all learners to have access to rigorous tasks. For example, the use of visuals, sentence frames, video clips, manipulatives, and interactive whiteboards is embedded in lesson plans and units. The *Wilson* reading program is used in grades 2 and 3 for at-risk students, and unit and lesson plans show that teachers incorporate tiered vocabulary in learning tasks to support language acquisition goals for students at all grade levels. In addition, there are tasks linked to technology-based curriculum resources designed for skills building and intervention activities. For example, web-based resources such as *LightSail*, *Mathletics*, *Activate*, and *Superkids* provide all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, with access to rigorous content and tasks.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, all students engage in high level discussions and complete cognitively demanding tasks. Teaching practices demonstrate multiple entry points to learning tasks for all learners.

Impact

All students are consistently immersed in learning tasks that culminate in high quality work products and foster high levels of thinking across grades and content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- 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 math class, grade 1 students challenged each other's thinking through peer-to-peer questioning as they used objects such as pencils, pens, yarn, a drinking straw, and a key as manipulatives for measuring and ordering objects by length. Students moved the objects around on their desks and could be heard debating which ones were longer or shorter as they compared the objects. In a grade 3 ELA class, students also engaged in a lively discussion where they analyzed words, text features, and illustrations in close reading of an article about how "The Moon Seems to Change" as it orbits the earth.
- In most classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students at all levels to be highly engaged in learning. In a grade 4 math class, the teacher used an interactive white board to present a video clip of a teacher describing and modeling how to solve a problem involving a fraction or decimal. Then the teacher modeled a similar problem to show students how to use a place value chart to indicate tenths. In a follow-up activity, the teacher asked students to work with a partner to solve a similar problem from their math text. The lesson ended with students writing out the steps used to solve the problem and presenting their work in a whole class share. Some of these types of supports were also noted in a kindergarten math class where the teacher used an interactive board to model strategies for solving word problems involving addition and subtraction strategies and then challenged students to work with a partner in using an erasable board to illustrate how they solved their own addition and subtraction word problems.
- The use of task extensions for advanced learners was evident in a few classrooms, including a grade 5 social studies class where the teacher engaged students working in groups to choose their own graphic organizer to report on details from their reading about similarities and differences between Spanish and Portuguese colonies. The teacher worked on differentiated tasks with the most struggling learners in small groups across the room while advanced learners worked with peers on an extension of the task that allowed them to read further to add information about European explorers, including Christopher Columbus. Similarly, in a bridge class with students in grades 3, 4, and 5, students worked with peers in groups reading differentiated portions of texts to answer differentiated questions about the formation of landforms. One group researched types of rocks, another investigated the effects of water, wind, ice, and plants on landforms, and a third group read to determine how rocks change over time. In most of the other classrooms, task extensions were not evident, and all students completed the same task.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

All staff members gather data from assessments aligned to curricula and use the data to provide feedback about student performance. Assessment practices contribute to some understanding of student progress towards learning goals.

Impact

At times, feedback is not actionable, and consistent implementation of data-driven adjustments to curricula and instruction is not yet evident across grades and disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader presented assessment calendars that illustrated how teachers use assessments such as *Fountas and Pinell* leveled reading assessment, on-demand reading assessments, *ReadyGen* and *GOMath!* unit assessments and performance tasks, Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments, and chapter tests to assess student performance across grades and subjects. The principal also referenced data from *Schoolnet* periodic assessments in outlining student strengths and areas of need, including student skill deficits in answering extended response questions across assessments. Comparative data that highlights student performance from one content area assessment to the next is not yet evident across grades and subject areas.
- Teachers described adjustments to curricula, such as revisions of content and teaching points based on analysis of tasks linked to assessments, including 2014-2015 New York State assessment data showing questions and skills that most students struggled with. For example, based on data from an assessment which identified student weaknesses in manipulating fractions, math teachers decided to assign additional practice problems as part of their intervention cycle. However, while conversations with teachers indicate that they analyze the results of assessments to identify areas for remediation and/or enrichment, assessment records and data analysis logs do not demonstrate that analysis of data consistently leads to the implementation of targeted adjustments to curricula and instruction across grades and content areas.
- Teachers utilize Common Core-aligned rubrics, checklists, and a school-wide grading policy aligned to the curricula to evaluate progress in student writing across grades and content areas. During the meeting with students, most indicated that their teachers use rubrics to explain what should be included in their work for them to “get a 4.” In addition, there are task-specific rubrics attached to some student work samples in student folders, and bulletin boards with student work show rubric-based feedback to students with next steps for the students to improve their work. On one work sample, the teacher commended the student for “lots of details about how to track weather” and advised her to “use a new paragraph for each main point.” By contrast, some feedback on other work samples consisted of the teacher only circling portions of the rubric, with no explicit next steps or explanations for the student to improve on their work.