



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. K396

K-12 School K396

**110 Chester Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Nira Schwartz-Nyitray

**Date of review: October 27-28, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen**

The School Context

P.S. K396 is a K-12 school with 311 students from kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 5% Asian, 50% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 13% White students. The student body includes 17% English Language Learners and 99% students with disabilities. Boys account for 66% of the students enrolled and girls account for 34%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 86.2%.

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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, collaborative teacher teams that consistently look at teacher practice, examine student work and analyze data. Embedded leadership structures ensure teachers have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

The work of the collaborative teacher teams has resulted in student progress and teacher growth and development. Teacher teams inform decisions regarding curricula, pedagogy, academic and behavioral interventions ensuring a shared commitment to attaining school goals.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate at least twice weekly in teacher teams using the tuning protocol, modified to meet students' cognitive level. The revised protocol includes the essential learning skill being addressed, academic and behavioral challenges, and assessment data. The teams analyze student work in addition to reflecting on teacher practice. Teacher cohorts ensure all tasks are rigorous and appropriately challenging and identify multiple entry points for struggling students. Formative Assessment of Standards Tasks (FAST) is aligned to the common core learning standards and all students demonstrated an average gain of in RI1 – 23%, RI10-24%, SL1-24%, W2-22%, OA20%, and MD-23%.
- Teachers and teams have referred students to Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) placement and they are succeeding in those placements based on their improved behavior and academic success. The Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) cohort meets bi-monthly and focuses on designing rubrics and instructional lessons to meet the needs of each population. Teamwork successfully combined increased reading comprehension and vocabulary development, math problem-solving skills, and self-management skills to help students succeed.
- Team members suggest collegial inter-visitation based on teachers' stated area of need to strengthen pedagogical practices. Teachers stated this form of professional development provides them with opportunities to observe specific teaching strategies, and classroom structure. In addition, teachers stated the coherent "look at student work" across all sites using their modified tuning protocol supports how lessons are differentiated to include all learners and the level of questioning used by teachers.
- Leadership structures are embedded within the school's daily operation. Teachers have assumed leadership roles by serving as: cohort facilitators, instructional guide/rubric writers, professional development presenters, curriculum selection, and participants in the process of interviewing teacher candidates. In addition, out-of-classroom roles include unit coordinators, school coach, mentors, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) coordinator. Staff stated school leaders foster collaboration and professional growth.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula to determine student progress. Teachers check for understanding and provide actionable feedback.

Impact

School leaders and teachers have an ongoing understanding of the progress of all learners and they effectively guide adjustments in units, lessons, and instructional practices at the team and classroom level. However, student self-assessment, peer-to-peer assessment varies, and sometimes meaningful feedback, thereby limiting student awareness of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers and paraprofessionals track daily student progress by using skill-based assessment. *Unique* provides an Observation Profile Tool and Checkpoints (pre- & post-tests) which indicates the instructional level for each student. Level 1 is primarily picture symbol-based material, level 2 merges picture symbols with text, and level 3 is text-based content.
- *Unique* curriculum assessments, aligned to the *CCLS* and the instructional shifts, support the writing of appropriate IEPs and SMART goals. Teachers stated that when students score consistently between 16-18 points on the tests for a period of three months, teachers re-administer the Profile Observation Tool to confirm moving the student to the next higher level.
- Across classrooms ongoing checks for understanding, as seen during class visits, included 1:1 conferencing with classroom teachers, exit slips, checklists and rubrics that meet the cognitive level of students. Students were given time to self-assess and “talk to their partner”. Students are aware of the concept of partnering, however, in some classes students could not demonstrate their understanding of the range of work that needs to be done with peers. In addition, prompting by adults was noted in some classrooms and student work rubrics varied in language. For example, in one classroom scores were proficient - 4 points, good understanding - 3 points, partial understanding - 2 points, and introduced - 1 point. In another classroom the language of the rubric was: excellent - 4 points, great - 3 points, good - 2 points, and ok - 1 point.
- Teachers review assessment results and student work samples weekly as was evident during a collaborative team meeting. The team used the data to adjust lessons. Teachers suggested supplementary guided group practice, creating a timeline as a visual scaffold, and sentence starters enabling students to begin their writing. While students were able to state what they were learning during class visits, not all students were able to explain what they needed to do next to earn a 4 on their rubric. Teachers stated that they will continue to do “additional work to support student understanding of next steps based on the rubric language”.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Strategic curricula decisions made by school leaders and staff have resulted in alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and integration of the instructional shifts for all learners. The school continues to deepen, expand and refine their curriculum maps and units of study to ensure a range of learning experiences, cognitively appropriate and challenging, thereby engaging all students in academics, social/emotional learning and life skills.

Impact

The school's curricula decisions with input from staff build coherence across all sites and foster student independence and academic and social/emotional growth, while promoting college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Purposeful choices about curricula are based on student performance and periodic assessments. The school has invested in Common Core-aligned *Unique Learning System* (ULS), designed for students with special needs, as its primary curriculum for all grade bands (K-2, 3-5, and 6-8). The curriculum provides monthly lesson plans and materials to address critical thinking skills in all content area subjects. In addition, web-based, interactive lesson plans provide multiple entry points, thereby engaging students.
- School leaders and teachers stated how the curriculum design ensures that all students, including those that have been hospitalized and are receiving home instruction, continue their learning in all content areas, and are in line with their classmates. In addition, data reveals all students demonstrated significant gains in the following Common Core learning standard measured by Formative Assessments of Standards Tasks (FAST): RI1 23%, RI10 24%, SL1 24%, W2 22%, and OA 20% between Fall, 2014 – Spring, 2015. In addition, Students Annual Needs Assessment Inventory (SANDI) data shows an average gain of 9 points in reading, 4.5 points in writing, 6 points in math, and 7 points in communication.
- Planning and refining is evident in the school's monthly instructional guides developed by a team of teachers based on the curriculum maps provided by *Unique*. The curriculum team generated instructional guides that provide an overview of the unit of study, scope and sequence for pacing the lessons, and are organized by grade bands, academic content area, and social skills development. These guides identify the standard, essential questions, learning targets, enrichment activities, and teaching strategies such as: turn and talk, think-pair-share, and Know, Wonder, Learn (KWL) graphic organizer. Differentiated tasks meet the needs of individual students and IEP goals, and develop them through Common Core-aligned assessments. For example, in a K-2 class students with autism were studying a unit on biomes, wetlands – water habitats. The redesigned curriculum map focuses and develops the thinking skill of classifying. The teacher differentiated the new vocabulary words as well as the culminating activities. One group of students drew pictures of their favorite animal while another group classified types of wetlands by completing a three-column chart.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teaching practices, across the vast majority of classrooms, reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best as informed by the Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. Teaching strategies tactically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

Impact

Across all classrooms, the unified Common Core-aligned curricula fosters widespread teacher collaboration, produces a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and teaching practices that meet the needs of all learners so that all produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching practice across classrooms visited reflects the consistent use of adequate scaffolds, provide multiple entry points, interactive activities and lesson adaptations to challenge and push the thinking of all students and different populations. Teachers use the workshop model in designing their lessons and instructional activities. Student work products, writing notebooks, and bulletin board displays provide consistent evidence of high quality work. In addition, Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) data shows teacher growth from 84% Effective and Highly Effective (2013-2014) to 90% (2014-2015).
- Direct teaching of academic vocabulary was evident in all classrooms visited. Classroom and speech teachers collaborate in developing cognitively challenging question techniques. In addition, teachers demonstrated scaffolding strategies such as, highlighting important details in a story or an article they were reading, modifying the lesson using symbolic text, and using narrative tools such as graphic organizers. In a middle school grade class for students with multiple disabilities (12:1:4), students used the *Smartboard* to demonstrate their understanding of the lesson, which was identifying the 6 biomes. Students worked in small groups discussing, and/or using Picture Exchange Communication (PEC) symbols and Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) devices regarding where they would rather live.
- Teachers use daily formative assessment data as well as student self-assessment to determine progress and make instructional adjustments. In addition, teachers confer with students to communicate and/or provide written remarks as to what the student did well. In a fourth grade class for students in alternate assessment (12:1:4), the students evaluated themselves using a picture symbol rubric designed with 4 levels of achievement: excellent, great, good, and okay. The teacher had a 1:1 conference with the student and stated, “Your essay showed that you understood the question. Next time you should use another detail from the text to show similarity such as the Earth Mother, The Birds, and The Far Winds.”
- All teachers, as well as paraprofessionals, received professional development in Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels for questioning skills. The school created a question matrix chart which provides teachers with visual cues demonstrating the different levels of “wh” questions. Paraprofessionals collaborate and work with the classroom teachers in understanding DOK and teachers have incorporated the use of scripted questions in the lesson plans. Teachers stated the implementation of *Lunch and Learns* provide additional weekly opportunities to brainstorm with colleagues and review strategies they can use in their classrooms. In addition, teachers and paraprofessionals are piloting the *ReThink* program in which videos of classroom instruction are presented and then discussed.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff implement effective strategies, through ongoing workshops, events, and performance updates, communicating high expectations and focused feedback to students and families connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

School structures foster collaboration among school leaders, staff, parents and students to communicate a cohesive set of high expectations throughout the school community and successfully support students in achieving those goals and preparing for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are consistently communicated to all constituents through a variety of means, both verbally and in writing. The School Survey shows that parents, teachers, and students express satisfaction in the area of rigorous instruction (81%), supportive environment (88%), and strong community-family ties (85%).
- School leaders provide ongoing professional development with regard to implementing best practices identified in Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. Parent workshops are conducted every Wednesday as requested by parents and/or school personnel. This has led to a climate of collaboration geared towards improved student outcomes.
- The Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) committee plans events which are intended to promote school spirit, developing appropriate social skills (walk and roll-a-thon and family fun days) and engage parents in their child’s education (reading to classes and viewing “museum art work”). In addition, parents stated they have been asked to be actively involved in the “transition process” by visiting District 75 high school programs with their child and other families, familiarizing themselves with all the options.
- High expectations for class work and behavior are modeled by teachers as seen in classrooms visited. Also, student council is designed to increase levels of independence, communication skills and self-esteem and all students are eligible. Students stated “we campaign and debate and then we vote”.
- Bulletin boards are current and display work that is rigorous, and student of the month and staff of the month. The school participates in the District 75 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Fair, which involves planning a long-term project focusing on a specific topic. To prepare students for high school and future work experiences, the eighth grade students are provided an opportunity to participate in entry level work prior to graduation which can be school- or community-based.