



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 399 Stanley Eugene Clark

Elementary School K399

**2707 Albemarle Road
Brooklyn
NY 11226**

Principal: Marion Brown

**Date of review: May 24, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

The School Context

P.S. 399 Stanley Eugene Clark is an elementary school with 488 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 72% Black, 15% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 8% English Language Learners and 7% 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 92.8%.

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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training for meeting expectations. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to all families.

Impact

Teachers hold themselves mutually accountable for meeting expectations, and families take part in supporting student progress toward expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders' expectations are reflected in the school's instructional focus, increasing the use of data to inform pedagogical practices, and the criteria for effective lessons, questions, discussion, engagement, assessment, rigor, and scaffolds (QDEARS). Feedback on teachers' instruction aligns to these expectations and to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. For example, teachers are reminded to capture information during checks for understanding for use in forming student groups, and to encourage all students to explain their thinking and respond to the thinking of others. Additionally, the principal reminds teachers that rubrics are for the students, therefore, make the language accessible to students, and offer next steps in feedback. This expectation was reflected in student work reviewed, in classroom displays of student work, and in discussions with teachers. Additionally, weekly bulletins offer shout-outs to teachers, reminders of scheduled professional learning, and expectations aligned to school goals. For example, the April professional learning time required all teachers to bring two levels of student work along with the holistic or analytic rubric used to assess it. The goal for this session was to ensure that teachers share the specifics of what a task was assessing, how the rubric was created to align to the purpose of the assessment, and to norm the scores.
- Parents shared that there are multiple modes of communication and resources provided to support their children with making progress toward the school's high academic expectations. "We receive a lot [of] information about each learning module so we can support our kids at home." During family workshops parents engage in tasks with their children, and, in several cases, as one parent stated "Our students taught us." Parents are also provided with online resources such as *Eureka Math* for at-home support.
- Several parents spoke about the school community. "There has never been a time that if I needed to speak to a teacher that they weren't available. My child does not want to leave the building." Parents noted that teachers come early or stay late to help students, welcome parents into classrooms, and hold weekly meetings to discuss their child's progress. Parents take pride in the high participation in school events from understanding the Common Core Learning Standards or Individualized Education Plans, to learning addition and subtraction concepts alongside their children. Additionally, parents shared their involvement in school activities from being trip escorts, managing the book fair, supporting the school's morning assembly affirmation led by student leaders, and having a voice in school-wide decisions as members of the School Leadership Team. For example, parents were instrumental in finding a way to bring Science Technology Engineering and Math curricula to the school next year.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into curricula for most learners leading to student engagement in challenging tasks and high levels of student thinking.

Impact

However, there were missed opportunities for all learners to consistently demonstrate high levels of thinking, participation, and ownership of their learning in discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Routines and structures for student-to-student small group discussions are in place across most classrooms. In a fourth grade science class students worked in groups to research an ecosystem, and each student conducted an aspect of the research that would contribute to highlighting the most important information gathered in a writing piece. Students readily shared their findings, read aloud text evidence, and knew that “we will have to write up our concerns about destroying the environment.” In this class students were deeply engaged in online research and readily shared their findings with each other. Midway through the work time, the teacher stopped to hear a sampling of each group’s findings, and encouraged students to summarize what a peer said prior to sending the students back to work.
- In a fifth grade math class, students worked in small groups tiered by level, intensive, strategic, or on level. The lesson plan indicated that tasks were also differentiated to accommodate learning styles such as visual/kinesthetic and visual logical, and an enrichment activity was in place for high performers though not in evidence in the portion of the lesson observed. This resulted in most students working collaboratively in small groups to solve multi-digit division problems. The teacher worked with one group, encouraging the students to question each other’s solutions. This prompted students to pose questions such as “Why do you think that?” and student-to-student questioning happened in several groups without the teacher’s prompting. Additionally, students understood that they were to read the problem, and circle or underline what is important. As one student stated, “We read the problem first so that we know the numbers we are working with and what to do.” In this class many students were engaged in discussions to get at why a math process was chosen, or to determine if their answer was right. However, this was inconsistent across groups limiting ownership opportunities for all students. For example, a student who sat with a partner noted that they were working independently because he was not up to where his peer was.
- Third grade math students worked together in small groups to determine the area and perimeter of a rectangle. At the beginning of the lesson the teacher asked students to turn and talk about the characteristics of a polygon and a parallelogram, and then opened the floor to a discussion. Students showed familiarity with accountable talks stems as they added on to each other’s ideas and responded to peers’ questions. The teacher allowed students to own the discussion only commenting when asking a student to speak louder. Several students dominated the conversation, and at the close of the student-led discussion it was unclear whether students had arrived at clear definitions of the two terms. Students then moved into groups to break down the question and to plan a strategy for solving the problem.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions that build instructional coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- In order to deepen students' conceptual understanding of problem solving in math and nudge students away from procedural thinking exclusively, teachers created a graphic organizer so that students can unpack a problem in several ways. Students first study the problem and consider the necessary information for solving it. Students then plan and verify their approach for solving, and examine the results (SOLVE). Problem solving culminates in students justifying their process in a written statement. Students are exposed to problems that can be solved in multiple ways. For example, one student used an array, drew a number bar, to help formulate the equation and solve the problem, while another student began with an estimate and then moved to solving the problem by adding and then dividing the numbers. This multiple problem solving process also established a consistent approach for exposing students to mathematical thinking across the upper grades, and students in the third and fifth grade math classrooms visited were highly engaged in the process. Additionally, fifth graders create their own multi-step math problems to offer a challenge to their peers, such as figuring out time needed based on a set of chores that must be accomplished before and after school.
- The fourth grade ecosystems project provided all learners the opportunity to research an ecosystem to learn about how plants and animals adapt for survival, to collect data on the annual average precipitation, and to learn about the impact of the environment on the selected ecosystem. The project offered students choice in responsibilities, experience with graphing and writing short informative paragraphs, and culminated in each group planning and delivering an oral presentation to their peers. One student learned that destroying forests "... increases CO² in the atmosphere due to the decomposition and burning of forests." All learners, therefore, had the opportunity to engage in learning at their level and pace, and support each other throughout the process.
- Curricula focus on writing across content areas. For example, fifth grade English Language Arts (ELA) students write evidence-based informational or argumentative essays on topics such as the importance of space exploration, the advantages or disadvantages of self-driving cars, or, in social studies, a photo essay of the Industrial Revolution. Fifth graders also compared *The Great Migration* and *Escape to Freedom*, and in second grade students learned how to embed signal words to reflect events in the novel *Charlotte's Web*. As a result of the emphasis on writing, second graders improved on all seven Common Core Standards assessed on the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) from October to March, and 18 of 26 fifth graders made gains in responding to text-dependent questions from the beginning of the year (BOY) assessment to the midyear (MOY) assessment.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teachers use common assessments and rubrics aligned to the school curricula and use the assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Teachers provide actionable feedback to students and use common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- In the early grades, teachers use the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment to predict the level of support students will need to improve in reading. This enables teachers to group students', low, medium and high, for targeted work in small groups based on the assessment outcomes, and make this adjustment to their lessons. For example, after reviewing reading assessment results, and to support student comprehension of informational texts, a second grade teacher introduced vocabulary prior to reading, clarified the significance of headings and repeated words, and modeled finding key details that connect to a main idea. Advanced students worked with a partner, on-level students wrote sentence summaries, and students who were below level practiced asking text-dependent questions about key details. This resulted in 22 second grade students achieving the top composite reading score on the fall assessment, and by MOY that number increased to 25 students. Similarly, 15 first grade students were at the top DIBELS level at the BOY assessment, and by MOY assessment 23 students achieved it.
- When October's MOSL results indicated that fifth grade students needed more support in essay writing and, in particular, their command of evidence, the teacher created a one-page document that outlined the specific information to include in each essay paragraph. The document also included a checklist based on rubric criteria, and an opportunity for students to use the checklist to review the effectiveness of each other's introductions and conclusions. These structures for organizing essays also made explicit that cited evidence must connect to claims. As a result of this focused work over time, 62% of the students made gains on the MOY MOSL, and, in samples of student writing reviewed, students' essay writing showed growth over time. Additionally, a targeted subgroup of second grade students in the lowest third received one-on-one support and 70% of the students moved up at least one level in sense of sentence from the October to the MOY assessment.
- All teachers maintain data binders to review student progress on common assessments, and discuss approaches for increasing student performance. The school's data specialist supports teachers with identifying trends, and teachers document the standards and skills assessed, tier students by level, and consider instructional next steps. For example, one data discussion document indicated that to address solving multi-step problems, the teacher would adjust pacing for practice time, and encourage students to investigate problems collaboratively. In addition to providing feedback to each other in these discussions, teachers offer actionable feedback to students such as, "Your solution path is clear and accurate, work on illustrating clearer fraction models", and "Your text coding helped to distinguish between sensory details and main idea. Provide more specific details for why they are important."

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

The majority of teachers are engaging in structured, professional collaborations that promote school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teachers' professional collaborations result in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The ELA team is monitoring several students with disabilities for targeted instructional support. During the meeting, teachers looked at the student work to see if the graphic organizers, checklists, and small group instruction provided were improving students' progress toward reading and writing standards. One teacher shared the gains made by one student in her group who, after "intensive tutorials" is persevering and completing work. The team looked at the student work to note the Common Core skills that improved, and areas for continued support. The ELA team spoke to how the implementation of the Restate-Answer-Cite-Explain (RACE) strategy for elaborating on writing responses had led to improvement in perseverance and completion for all learners. After a review of the written work, the team concluded the organizers had met their desired outcome of helping the subgroups the team focused on, and agreed to keep them in place to offer continued support.
- Teacher teams are engaged in norming their grading practices, and readily recognize that this is sometimes difficult. However, as one teacher noted, "When we first started norming our scoring to align to the Common Core traits measured on the MOSL, the process felt rigid, but now I have gotten there." Where she used to look at student work holistically, the norming protocols introduced during weekly professional learning time that are now a part of department team meetings has improved her capacity to score student work accurately and objectively to inform her planning and practice. Another teacher offered that the value in the team following student progress over time has several benefits. It creates clarity on where students are during parent communications, and helps teams to make collaborative decisions that result in changes to practice such as making time to address math skills students did not master during warm ups in the next module, or revising the school's writing rubric from holistic to analytical across grades.
- A second grade teacher shared that on her team teachers use a data protocol to look at high, medium, and low performing students. This resulted in forming student groups by writing skill such as generating a main idea. Groups remained together for 6 or 8 weeks with a focus on either command of evidence, introductions and conclusions, or expressing opinions in writing. Teachers created the groups based on examination of assessment outcomes and student writing. As a result of strategizing with colleagues, reflecting on what worked and did not, and receiving ongoing feedback from her team, each student group made gains from the BOY assessment to the MOY assessment. For example, 8 students mastered command of evidence, and 11 students mastered writing opinion statements. She attributed this shift in her approach to supporting her low performing students to the work of her team.