



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 506: The School of Journalism & Technology

Elementary School K506

**330 59 Street
Brooklyn
NY 11220**

Principal: Dana Parentini

**Date of review: March 17, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

The School Context

P.S. 506: The School of Journalism & Technology is an elementary school with 829 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 30% Asian, 1% Black, 65% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 27% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. 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	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	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	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate and support parents on expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Effective communication results in a culture of mutual accountability among staff and successful partnerships with families that lead students toward high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate their expectations through emails and memoranda to further the staff's work on assessment, their lens on instructional practices and school goals. In one memorandum, the information shares the success of the English as a New Language (ENL) program using the school's common assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT). The resulting data provides teachers with areas to focus upon when working with this subgroup and they share information on a program being implemented this year. To assist with lesson planning and instruction, another memorandum shares the expectations on how to integrate test preparation with current workshop model structures, a pacing calendar for aid with ELA guides and states that these items should be considered for small group and individual instruction.
- Feedback to teachers on post observation reports provides detailed evidence of how they have demonstrated effectiveness towards the instructional focus and provides support for areas in need of improvement. An example of written feedback suggested that the teacher use Bloom's taxonomy to ask varied questions to foster student opportunities to demonstrate higher-order thinking and for the teacher to use other questions for assessment. During the next observation, progress was made towards the instructional focus and questioning.
- Teachers reported that they set clear expectations for each other with regard to their roles and contributions during data team and inquiry meetings. Each teacher is expected to contribute and follow up on the team's goals and decisions, and is fully required to be reflective of their teaching practices and how they contribute to the creation of assessments. Additionally, teachers are expected to bring information to contribute to the topic of each meeting including student work and if they have implemented any new strategies suggested by the team.
- Parents reported that they receive monthly grade newsletters that inform them of what their child will be learning per subject area. Additionally, information is shared during parent "Meet and Greet" days, where teachers explain the content and ways parents can assist their child. Parental involvement has increased 8% with the addition of more workshops and "Meet and Greets" this year. Parents are provided with resources including extra materials and academic websites which they find especially helpful in math when their child demonstrates difficulty with a problem. One parent stated her child's teacher recommended specific websites which have helped her child get on grade level. Other parents shared similar experiences regarding their child's progress from use of these resources.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics, grading policies and other assessments aligned to the curricula and their practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment but do not yet offer a clear picture of student mastery through varied approaches.

Impact

Feedback and adjustments are in the process of leading students to become aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses unit assessments aligned to *GO Math!* and the *Diagnostic Reading Assessment (DRA)* across the year to assess student math and reading levels. Performance tasks and rubrics aligned to units of study in social studies and science assess content area skills. This year, the grading policy has changed for the upper grades from performance levels 1 through 4 to percentages where the weighted average for each subject area is 45% for school-based assessments based on specific Common Core Learning Standards, 30% class participation and 25% homework. The grading policy along with the use of assessments and rubrics assist teachers in gauging the levels of their students' understanding across subject areas and setting goals with them.
- Students shared that their teachers provide them with support in areas they find difficult and stated, "They give us facts about the topics we don't know about." With regard to rubrics, students responded that they serve as a checklist that supports them through completing a task. Students shared their goals such as moving up reading levels, working on spelling and using math models to help solve problems. Teachers have provided them with verbal and written feedback to improve the quality of their work. Although students were able to understand their teachers' comments, only a few students were able to provide clear next steps and how they have used their feedback in other ways. One student reviewed her written feedback and shared that she needs to work on adding more details to her writing. The student shared that she used this information when writing during her next assignment. Another student shared that he needs to work on adding more examples and elaborate his thinking when writing. During his next assignment, he shared how he explained his thoughts when writing a book.
- Teachers confer with students, using small groups and questioning as ongoing checks for understanding. In one grade 3 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, the teachers conferred with students on areas where they could provide feedback to their partners and how to use a rubric to support their thinking. In addition, students were provided with checklists and prompts to help them reflect on their work and develop next steps. However, for a few students, the assessment of their partner's work was not as accurate even when using a rubric. In a grade 1 checklist, the students reviewed their writing for specific components and shared that they were good at giving reasons and spelling tricky words but needed to work on labeling of pictures. However, how the information was used in future assignments from self-reflection was not consistently evident across the school.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and appropriately engage students to persist at tasks at a high level of thinking.

Impact

Student tasks and work products reflect high levels of participation and higher-order thinking across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a variety of scaffolds and strategies in classrooms to support students on tasks such as visuals, paired or group conversations and small group instruction. In a grade 4 ELA class, students were grouped for discussion to determine the correct multiple choice answer to questions and the rationale for picking one over another. One group debated over one choice as a student stated, “That can’t be the answer because it happened a long time ago.” Another student rebutted the response with details from the text until the group came to consensus and chose one final answer. Other groups showed similar patterns of debating answers and deciding which strategies would be best to use when trying to find an answer for a particular type of question or skill.
- In another grade 4 ELA class, students were grouped for discussion to share their thoughts from open-ended questions provided by the teacher. In one group, students shared that they thought the character, Amy, was scared and worried during a power outage. They continued to add their thoughts about the character using details from the text and discussed how the secondary character, Emily, reacted and how she influenced the main character. Across the room, other students shared similar responses that reflected synthesis and interpretation of their thoughts.
- In a grade 2 ELA class, based on a review of their writing, students were engaged in conversations to determine if they were “good” at a particular skill. In groups, students reviewed each other’s and their own writing, and shared responses such as “I need to practice adding more details” or “You need to add more thought to your conclusion.” These responses align with Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* Level 3, as students referred to details in each writing piece to support their thinking.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous habits across subject areas and grades.

Impact

The resultant curricular unit plans and tasks are coherent across grades and subject areas and promote college and career readiness for all students, who must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the *Journeys* curriculum and *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP)* for their ELA program. *GO Math!* is used as the primary math curriculum and is supplemented with the addition of *Exemplars* tasks that are used to engage students with math communication and application as part of the schools' goals. Teacher-created curricular maps, which follow the City's scope and sequence, integrate reading and writing skills as an interdisciplinary approach to these two content areas to align further with the standards. In addition, technology is integrated into units where students are asked to write informational essays using online resources.
- There is a strong emphasis on balancing fiction and non-fiction in the majority of unit plans. In a kindergarten science unit plan, a learning objective indicates that the students will use appropriate vocabulary associated with the properties of fabric using experiments in *Harry the Dirty Dog* and *Fabric, How Are Fabrics Used*. Math *Exemplar* tasks vary across the instructional shifts in the areas of fluency, focus and depth of understanding. In a grade 5 unit plan, one support and enrichment task includes using fraction models to represent a problem.
- Unit and lesson plans provide tasks containing questions and prompts aligned to *DOK* Level 3. In a grade 1 math lesson plan, the essential question was, "How can you compare two numbers to find which is greater?", aligned to *DOK* level 3. Close reading and discussion questions in a grade 4 ELA lesson plan prompt students to compare and contrast the themes in two texts and to use details to support their answers. In a kindergarten social studies unit plan, the task required students to develop a model of a neighborhood and work on an interesting building of their choice and to create a model of it. Afterwards, students are prompted to craft an informational piece of writing which teaches others about the importance of their building to the community.

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 strengthen teacher instructional capacity and promote the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership structures empower teachers to play an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

Effective professional collaborations result in school wide instructional coherence, improved student learning outcomes and increased academic achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams meet weekly to review work products and data for students with disabilities, the school’s target group. During these meetings, teachers use protocols to look at student work, discuss strengths and areas in need of improvement, and determine whether the strategies they have chosen led to meeting the team’s short-term goal. In addition, each team maintains notes of each meeting to track and reflect on the suggested strategies for reflection and providing each other with feedback on instructional practices. Teachers come to consensus on strategies to use with particular students and determine the usefulness of the chosen methodologies to embed into units of study for either their current or next cycle. In grade 5, teachers found that using themes and multiple genres builds student interest, enabling them to elaborate more in their writing. In grade 4, teachers have determined that students who are reading at level M have a difficult time moving to the next level. They found that if they focus their lessons on skills and strategies for students with this group to determine the importance of a text, they would be able to master that reading level.
- During a team meeting, grade 1 teachers used their time to review the progress of students within cycle 2 on the short term goal, “Students will be able to integrate all sources of information to help them monitor their reading as measured by running records.” In addition, teachers discussed the usefulness of the strategies used with their struggling students. During cycle 2, teachers used checklists and other visual scaffolds to support students in asking themselves questions as they read to assist with decoding based on their research of Marie Clay’s methodologies. After reviewing their students’ work, most of the students increased reading levels and teachers shared that their students were able to use visual and syntax cues to decode yet needed more work on integrating meaning cues. For cycle 3, teachers decided to focus on meaning cues and comprehension to assist students in reading. They discussed using shared reading and a “guess the covered word” strategy along with thinking aloud to teach students to focus on meaning along with other cues while reading.
- There are multiple vertical teams that focus on student learning including the ELA and math teams, a data committee, English as a Second Language (ESL) and a students with disabilities teams. The ELA team is working on making teacher-student conferences more effective. They have worked on reviewing the types of questions asked during lessons, with an emphasis on how prepared students are when exiting conferences. The math team has developed tools to assist teachers in the area of math communication and to determine which *Exemplar* tasks will contribute to the improvement of this skill each month.