



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 140 Nathan Straus

Elementary-Middle School M140

**123 Ridge Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Melissa Rodriguez

**Date of review: January 14, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

The School Context

P.S. 140 Nathan Straus is an elementary-middle school with 383 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 5% Asian, 13% Black, 78% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 14% English Language Learners and 34% 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 92.5%.

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	Focus	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, assessment practices reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding, are aligned with the school's curricula, and offer a clear portrait of student mastery.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Kindergarten teachers used item skill analysis of student data on phonemic awareness to create word work tubs and picture cards for students in need of improvement. Grade 5 data analysis informed teachers of the lack of student mastery of decoding skills, thus teachers created targeted reading groups to improve decoding skills.
- A comparison of September and December running record data identified students who had not demonstrated significant growth over time. After an analysis of the data, teachers targeted students for a 10-week cycle of small group support to improve delays in retention and processing. Teachers also created a post-assessment to determine growth at the end of the cycle of support. Grade 5 to 8 math unit assessment data revealed that across grades 5 through 8 students have yet to master fluency of multiplication facts 0 through 12. Based on this data, the school identified multiplication fluency as a schoolwide focus.
- During a student meeting, all of the students received feedback on their work and could articulate the next steps in their learning. One student stated, "Next time I will explain my thinking more, add more details and explain my graph." Another student stated, "I will use different words, separate my paragraphs, and add some dialogue." A grade 7 student shared that after writing about her cousin as an "everyday hero," she knows her writing is better when she writes about something that is important to her.
- In a math classroom, the teacher repeatedly checked for understanding using questioning. The teacher asked, "Which line represents the best fit? Why does it need to go in the same direction and what are we talking about when we say positive or negative?" When students demonstrated difficulty explaining the impact of positive and negative on the slope of a line the teacher returned to the SMARTboard to illustrate. When a student provided a partial answer, the teacher asked a probing question, "What else do we need for best fit?" Students were able to explain the impact of positive, negative, and best fit, after additional questions and teacher illustration.
- In a grade 4 classroom, a teacher worked with a small group on opinion writing using a rubric. The group struggled with the "so what" section of the opinion rubric that required an explanation of why they felt strongly about their opinion. After an on-the-spot review, the teacher provided additional guidance and time for the group to reflect, answer the question, and explain it to a partner. The teacher stated, "Because this section is so important I want you to fill it out first." After reflection and sharing with a partner, all students were able to complete the "so what" section and explain their reasoning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. The school plans and refines curricula and academic tasks for a diversity of learners including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact

Curricula is not yet sufficiently adjusted so that individual and groups of students, including the lowest and highest performing, have access.

Supporting Evidence

- A cross-curricular unit in social studies and literacy includes Common Core Learning Standards for a range of reading and text complexity, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension and collaboration and production and distribution of writing. Lessons collected for grades 5 and 8 cite standards for reading and writing and include activities that embed instructional shifts 4 and 6 for English Language Arts (ELA), academic vocabulary and text-based answers respectively.
- A grade 8 math lesson integrates math shift 5, application. The plan requires students to apply math knowledge to a real life situation. The lesson asks students to create a model to renovate the school gym adding seven and eight foot benches along the gym walls. Students would need to use math to decide how many and what size benches could be used allowing for the dimensions of the gym.
- English Language Arts curriculum maps include adjustments to provide access for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Adjustments include multiple versions of text with the same theme and main idea, differentiated graphic organizers, front loading vocabulary, and spiraling homework assignments to retain skills. However, only a few lessons included plans or adjustments for the lowest or highest achieving students.
- Based on pre- and post-ELA test results, teachers adjusted ELA curriculum maps to allow additional time for re-teaching and small group instruction after informal and unit assessments. Based on math performance across grades the school also adjusted math curricula to include a focus on multiplication fluency, but curricula or tasks have yet to be refined for individual students or the highest performing.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teacher questioning, scaffolds, and student discussions, provide multiple entry points into the curriculum.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In a self-contained classroom, the teacher supported students with questions and scaffolds that moved their work forward. Before students prepared for a debate the teacher asked students: “What do we need to do first?”, “Pro means?”, “Con means?”, and “What’s evidence?” The teacher also reminded a student, “No highlighting, yet we need to read first.” In the same classroom grade 4 students were developing claims and highlighting evidence in one color, while grade 5 students were developing claims and counterclaims and highlighting evidence in two colors.
- In a grade 4 lesson, the teacher conferred with a student one-on-one. Her comments included “Read a little for me. Use your finger. Read it again and keep using your finger, you are losing your place as you read.” The student continued to use his finger after the conference.
- In a grade 7 lesson students debated whether organ donation should be mandatory. Students read information to support their discussion. An ELL student’s English text was translated to Spanish and read aloud by a bilingual student partner. The pair then prepared their argument for the upcoming debate.
- In a grade 8 ELA lesson students engaged in a *Socratic* seminar responding to the questions, “What does Anna Deavere Smith mean when she says ‘step outside a situation’? And what does it mean to step outside a situation?” During the seminar, students responded to each other’s comments, cited textual evidence, questioned their classmate’s statements, and provided real life examples. One student stated, “You step outside to see how someone else would feel. If I think about it, I would be upset too.”
- In a social studies lesson students read and discussed historical documents and artwork depicting the Boston Massacre. Students discussed how documents or photos might be biased by the author’s support of the British Army or the colonists. Students discussed, “Why does each of you have a different summary of the same event?”, and “How does bias contribute to each group’s understanding of the event?”

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to all staff. Teacher teams and staff offer ongoing feedback, guidance and support to students

Impact

Systematic accountability for high expectations ensures consistent communication. Teacher teams and staff prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership consistently communicates with all staff via a daily bulletin board, weekly emails, mailbox notices, faculty meetings, monthly calendars, during team meetings, and one-on-one feedback sessions. An email sent to all faculty lists areas “Where the school is moving forward.” The list includes greater student engagement, greater conversations among students, student inquiry/questioning, student monitoring and self-assessment. During the teacher meetings, teachers clearly articulated the school’s expectations for student engagement and highlighted that they always feel informed and know what is expected. One teacher stated that the monthly calendar clearly outlines what is expected and the school leaders update it as needed to make sure they are all on the same page.
- School leaders provide training aligned to the school focus on using data to inform instruction. A September professional development agenda lists the session goals as, discuss focus goals for school based on data, identify clear expectations and create an improvement plan. In a November professional learning session teachers reviewed beginning of the year and mid-year reading assessment data to analyze student growth in reading. This data was used to identify students in need of reading partners. During a faculty conference the school leader modeled data analysis for staff using the school’s Quality Snapshot, Quality Review and School Learning Environment Survey.
- Grade 8 students have the opportunity to take an elective course to prepare for the specialized high school exam. A student shared that this course “gets you ready for high school work.”
- Middle school students shared that they feel they are being prepared for high school. One student stated, “We have more freedom and we can move freely in class.” Another student said, “They are teaching us to write like high school...to inform the reader.” A third student stated that middle school teachers expect you and your work to be on time because “in high school you can’t be late.”
- In grade 7 students complete a mini-exit project that mirrors the eighth grade exit project required for all grade 8 students to qualify for graduation. The school provides assemblies for grade 8 students on the high school application process. School faculty and staff provide guidance on research methods to find the right high school, available open houses and tips on how to prepare for high school auditions and interviews. A calendar of open houses and information sessions is shared with all grade 8 students and reminders are given to students applying to schools that require a visit.

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

The majority of teachers engages in inquiry-based professional collaborations and has a voice in key decisions.

Impact

Teacher collaboration and distributed leadership strengthen teacher capacity and affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade teams analyzed 2015 New York State assessment results. In response to student performance levels, teams decided to focus on math and writing. Teachers created two inquiry-based teams, the math collaborative team, and the evidence-based writing team. Both inquiry teams include teachers from pre-kindergarten to grade 8.
- The use of *Socratic* seminar began in one classroom and is now a teaching practice across the middle school. Teachers shared that they developed a rubric for the seminar that allows them to have a shared academic language and exemplar of “what success looks like.”
- Teachers lead the professional development committee. One teacher shared that they have the “autonomy to decide how and when professional development happens.” Another teacher shared that she has the freedom to select professional development that she can learn from and then decide if it is “a good fit for the school” community.
- Teachers and paraprofessionals complete surveys to identify needs and areas where they are experts in particular practices. Based on this information the professional development committee selects faculty to lead professional development for their colleagues.
- Based on team data analysis the school selected to focus on sight word retention from kindergarten to grade 2, multiplication fluency from kindergarten to grade 8, and study skills across all content areas. Student data shows improvement in sight word retention, math automaticity, and multiplication fluency.