



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**P.S. 185 - The Early Childhood Discovery and
Design Magnet School**

Early Childhood School M185

**20 West 112 Street
Manhattan
NY, 10026**

Principal: Jane Murphy

**Date of review: March 15, 2016
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The School Context

P.S. 185 - The Early Childhood Discovery and Design Magnet School is an early childhood school with 240 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 2. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 58% Black, 28% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 8% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.7%.

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	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	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. School leaders and staff effectively promote high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness for all students.

Impact

School leaders create a culture of high expectations that promotes mutual accountability for staff and builds strong partnerships with families so that as a community everyone helps students meet these expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership provides all teachers a clear understanding of the school community's high expectations through the faculty handbook, monthly newsletters, emails, morning news and principal's chats. Keeping in line with the school's instructional focus of student engagement, the school has focused on strengthening student conversations and collaboration. Both teachers and administration hold each other mutually accountable in developing ways to promote student ownership of their learning. Teachers research methodology to support student discussion and examine each other's practices towards achieving this school wide goal. With support from school leaders, teachers create and examine case studies that examine student progress in understanding content-concepts and discussion skills. Recently, teachers focused on increasing their student's ability to prove why they had solved a problem correctly in mathematics. As part of their inquiry cycle they are using the skill of arguing as it relates to student ownership of learning.
- Parents shared that through school Dojo, an online platform that stores student grades, they are aware of their child's academic progress. The school has offered a series of workshops to help parents understand the common core academic expectations. Parents spoke about the most recent parent workshop being extremely helpful in teaching them to be partners in their child's learning. Recently, the assistant principal ran a workshop using the fishbowl protocol where parents watched the assistant principal work with the students on math strategies. After the workshop, parents left with activities that they could do at home to reinforce what they had just learned. One parent stated that he now understood the importance of the standards. A series of kindergarten lessons on healthy eating inspired parents to ask teachers to assist them in reaching out to Harlem Hospital to have a nutritionist come to the school to speak to both students and parents on healthy eating habits as a means of preventing diabetes.
- The school has partnered with parents through "café chats" giving parents the opportunity to talk about children's challenging behaviors or learn more about developmentally appropriate behaviors. Parents find that these meetings help them set appropriate expectations for their children. An articulation day is held each year to help parents and students get ready for the next grade. Second grade students go to the articulating school and spend time explaining what it is like being a student at the school. On this day as well, students in the other grades spend time in the grade that they will be moving into in the fall. Parents stated that this provides a positive emotional and educational experience for parents, teachers and students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

While the school has a unified dot rubric system and consistently uses checks for understanding, criteria for student academic success separate from behavioral success is not clearly defined.

Supporting Evidence

- A common rubric based on a system of dots is implemented across all classrooms. A green dot refers to appropriate behavior or grade appropriate work, a yellow dot indicates improvement is needed and a red dot signals a concern. While this rubric is used across all grades and subjects and students are able to articulate what the rubric means, there is not always a clear separation between behavioral assessment and academic performance. For example, in one class a student who was constantly calling out earned a green dot because she had solved a math problem correctly and in another reading class a teacher was conferencing with a child and told her that although she had read the sentences correctly, she had not earned a green dot because of her behavior.
- In a meeting with students, all students were able to articulate the gradations in the dot criteria, but were unable to state exactly what they had to do to perform at the next level. Most of the students shared a piece of writing but were unable to state what they needed to do to improve their work. Most focused on spelling or punctuation. Students stated behavior as the only criteria when asked what they had to do to achieve a blue dot, which is the highest grade. One student said, "Don't act up with the teacher." While another stated, "Pay attention."
- Checks for understanding are used in most classrooms resulting in lesson adjustments and some allowed for student self-assessment. For example, in one math class the teacher asked students to volunteer the answer to the problem. This resulted in two answers and students were divided as to which answer they agreed with. The teacher called on one student from each group to present his thinking to the class. The student with the correct answer was asked to present first. As the student explained his answer, many students who had an incorrect answer changed their mind and now understood their error. As the student with the incorrect answer presented, classmates pushed his thinking asking him why he had made a particular computation. This created an opportunity for the student to self-correct and the class quickly came to a consensus.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. Student work is used to refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

All students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are immersed in common core aligned instruction and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- A project-based approach to teaching is utilized across classrooms. The *Journeys* reading program ensures that students are exposed to a balance of text that is non-fiction and fiction. The emphasis on student use of evidence to support an opinion is an instructional focus for the year. This reading program is interdisciplinary and includes science and social studies texts. The *GO MATH!* program is used for mathematics, which is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. A special Lego engineering class that focuses on construction and developing critical thinking and problem solving skills is offered to all students.
- Data from the students' running records assessment indicated they were making rapid increases in their reading levels. As a result, some of the stories in the *Journeys reading* program were changed to ensure that students would be engaged with more complex text. The English Language Arts curricula is supplemented with chapter books to ensure that students are reading books that are on their instructional level or one level higher. The latest data indicates 100% of the students in grade two have had gains in reading levels from the September baseline assessment to the January benchmark and 47% of these students are currently meeting or exceeding their grade appropriate reading level.
- In mathematics, several revisions to the curriculum have been made this school year. The standard involving numbers and operations is an instructional focus for the early grades. Data from the Measure of Student Learning assessment led teachers to introduce number talks to help build mental math and improved computational skills. In November, analysis of student work indicated a need for additional differentiation to support student fluency. This led to the integration of math games into weekly class work. In December, the school administered a performance task and the results led to the redesign of their math assessments in order to get more detailed information regarding areas of weakness and areas of student mastery.
- The school used information from grade three scores on the state exam to strengthen the part of the curriculum that addresses fractions and number sense. The *GO MATH!* program was then supplemented with Module 8 from *Engage NY* to ensure that students would have the opportunity to learn all the concepts needed before the state exam.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of participation.

Impact

The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* informs teacher's practices. Student discussion and participation reflect high levels of student participation and thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The belief that students need to become active participants in their learning and that learning happens best through collaboration was evident in all classrooms. Teachers consistently created opportunities for students to reflect upon their learning and to articulate what they learned. Collaborative learning was observed as students shared strategies and offered each other support. This was best seen in a kindergarten social studies class that was working on games to understand the concept of community. During this class, students had to play a game and follow group rules. When some students became competitive and tried to win the game, his or her peers intervened and opened a discussion about fairness and how to cooperate so that everyone feels valued. Students drew the principal into the conversation as a facilitator and all students agreed that learning happens best when everyone learns together and supports each other.
- In a grade two Integrated Co-Teaching class, the teachers split the class for instruction. In one group the teacher used a rekenrek to have the students work on adding numbers and writing the equation $2+2+2=6$, as well as, understanding the concept that the opposite of this equation is also true. In the other group, students gathered around a wipe off board and worked on horizontally adding sets of numbers to write an equation. For example, students had to mentally add $13+13$. Students were discussing the approach they would take to solve this equation. While both sets of students were required to explain their thinking and strategy, student conversation ranged from procedural, as in the group with the rekenrek discussing how 3 equal groups are six, to student centered in the second group. In the second group, students discussed their mental math strategies when adding horizontally. One student offered an incorrect answer as a way to rewrite an equation. Students in the group held this student accountable by asking him to explain his thinking and reasoning for the new equation he presented
- In a Lego engineering class, students were divided into eight groups using two different approaches to building a pinwheel that they would test in front of a fan to see if it worked. Some of the groups of students were given a kit with standard parts and had to follow directions to build a pinwheel. Students in the challenge group had to create the pinwheel blade. Students chose from different types of paper, used a blueprint and worked collaboratively. High levels of student discussion were observed as students shared their approach and thinking with each other in order to build a pinwheel that worked successfully.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured; inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Distributive leadership results in strong teacher collaboration and allows for voice in decisions about student learning across content areas and grades.

Supporting Evidence

- In a math teacher team meeting teachers examined student work and discussed the strategies that students used to solve math problems. Teachers taught students four strategies for solving a word problem. While most of the students successfully used one strategy to solve the problem, teachers noticed that some students used two strategies, one strategy to solve the problem and one strategy to check the answer. Teachers discussed how using two strategies deepened student’s mathematical understanding. As the teacher’s re-grouped students for instruction, they made a note to move these students to a higher math group and to teach the other students in the class how to use two strategies.
- While all teachers use “I can” statements in the lesson objective as a way of creating student-centered lessons, teachers wanted to look at instruction that would support the instructional focus on student ownership. In keeping with this philosophy, teachers wanted to use an instructional method that required students to explain and justify their answers. Teachers began to research different math approaches and selected Cognitive Guided Instruction (CGI) as a way of deepening math practice by increasing rigor and student conversation. After a conversation with school leaders, teachers created a lab classroom where they focused on this methodology. Teachers stated that they have developed a better understanding of the knowledge that students bring to the math learning process and how they can connect that knowledge with the formal concepts of computational skills and problem solving. Teachers also stated CGI requires students to stand up to explain their answer. As a result peers ask clarifying questions and students defend their answers or self-correct. Student ownership of their learning is the end product.
- Teachers in the school are focused on developmental writing and on students creating short responses. Through the analysis of student work samples, teachers feel that they are ready to adopt a literacy approach that requires students to go through a writing process. Teachers are currently in conversation with school leaders about adopting the writer’s workshop process where students gather ideas, experience writing drafts and engage in the revision process to create a polished writing piece.