Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S./I.S. 187 Hudson Cliffs

Elementary - Middle School M187

349 Cabrini Boulevard
Manhattan
NY 10040

Principal: Cynthia Chory

Date of review: November 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons

The School Context

P.S./I.S.187 Hudson Cliffs is an elementary - middle school with 803 students from grade Kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 3% Black, 58% Hispanic, and 34% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.2%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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 *Framework for Teaching*, 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		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations of the *Danielson's Framework for Teaching* to staff and successfully partner with families to communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact
These structures have resulted in a culture of mutual accountability among all stakeholders and increased student progress towards expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has provided the staff with clear high expectations communicated through school-wide meetings, smaller collaborative meetings, and differentiated feedback to teachers. School leaders have built a support structures to ensuring expectations are met through differentiated plan for professional development around the Danielson Framework for Teaching. They identified trends of instructional strengths, such as using questioning and discussion techniques, and designed coherent instruction and organize intervisitations among the staff. Teachers visit each other classes and develop two focus questions to guide them during the visitation.

- First year teachers meet with the principal every Tuesday morning for coffee where they share and receive feedback and a basket of treats. School leaders hold staff accountable through the clinical observation cycle and provide teachers with professional development with the focus on rigorous instruction. Teachers use surveys to communicate their interests of professional development based on personal and professional goals. Teachers receive a check list and must select two areas that they want to focus on with professional development. The areas are lesson planning and organization, activity-based instruction, use of assessments, use of questioning, classroom management, use of manipulatives, calculators and technology, classroom procedures and routines, visuals such as rubrics, student work, use of group work or differentiation and homework such as reviewing and appropriateness.

- Parents shared that the school connects parents with a pathway to college and career readiness through the following activities - Back to School Night, High School Night, and Career week (grades 5-8). Parents are invited to a number of workshops, meetings, and orientation and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) workshops. Notices are backpacked for students and also posted on the web. Parents also participate to host or train other members of the school community. During the parent interview, the parents stated that the school uses Engrade and parents can access the online grading system to review their children's performance during the year. Parents stated they have access to their child's grade on their assignments, tests, quizzes, projects and homework as well as classroom participation, behavior and attendance.

- The school offers a rigorous academic experience which helps set the culture of learning in the school. According to the School Quality Guide High School Readiness Indicators, all grade 8 courses lead to high school credit and 100% percent of the students passed their accelerated courses.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across most classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and academic tasks that foster higher-order thinking. Strategic entry points, high quality supports for diverse learners, and student discussions that prompt rich thinking vary across subject areas.

Impact
Most students demonstrate higher-order thinking yet some lessons did not fully demonstrate refinements of instructional strategies, including questioning and discussions techniques that ensure strategic entry points for all learners into the curricula limiting student ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In keeping with the school's belief of how students learn best, across most classrooms visited, including those of new teachers, students engaged in small group instruction and infusing the instructional focus of citing textual evidence and academic vocabulary. In the majority of the classrooms, students cited textual evidence and teachers posted word walls and some teachers referred to academic vocabulary during the lesson. In a math lesson, the students use academic vocabulary to explain multiplication facts and composite numbers. In a science lesson, the teacher use academic vocabulary to unpack delta, deposition and erosion for her students.

- During a grade 8 Literacy lesson, students worked in groups and partnerships to cite textual evidence from their text and to explain the author's use of elements of the text to express different perspectives. Students identified members of the Little Rock Nine, key players of the civil rights movement, goals and intention of each person and their attitudes and feelings. Students engaged in peer-to-peer discussions about their partner's work. In a few classrooms visited, there were limited strategic aids such as discussion prompts or sentence starters available to help students articulate their learning to their partners.

- In a few classrooms visited, all students worked on the same task with some variations in approaches in some instances. In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, two students moderated a debate that asked if women deserve to have equal rights as men. Students gave reasons that support their sides and points to rebut against their opponents. However, in a few classes, students responded to the teacher with limited interaction with their peers.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula across grades and content are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and are planned refined using student work and assessment data.

Impact
Curricula across grades and content is cognitively engaging, integrates the instructional shifts, and promotes college and career readiness for all learners, ensuring student access and engagement in rigorous curricula and tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The school embraces a balanced literacy approach with the workshop model. The school uses *Writer's Workshop* and Pearson's *ReadyGEN*™ program in Kindergarten through grade 5. In grades 6 through 8, the school uses Scholastic's *Common Core CODE X*™ program for ELA. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's *GO Math!* program is implemented in the elementary grades and *Connected Mathematics Project 3* (CMP3) in the middle grades. Teachers infuse *Fundations* in grades K-2, trade books for social studies and *Full Option Science System*™ (FOSS) to support science. Grade 4 Science students were tasked to assist Charles Darwin to describe a food chain and explain this idea to his daughter's grade 2 class. Students were asked to select two potions; to write from the point of view of a consumer or illustrate a food chain. Based on the needs of students, the school has collaboratively implement programs using the workshop model. This allows for teachers to modify units and lessons based on real time formative assessment gathered in the classroom and ensures that all learners have access to the content.

- Curricula and academic tasks are planned using student work and data. Teachers embed high-interest, hands-on learning activities within the curriculum to engage students. For example, grade 8 students learned how to use DNA fingerprints and blood types as evidence to verify biological relationships. School leaders and faculty identified standards across grades. For example, in grade 3 students struggle with describing the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause and effect. Grade 5 students struggle with quoting accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

- Teacher teams reviewed student work and assessment data to gain a better knowledge of their students' abilities and challenges. Teachers revised performance tasks, created standard aligned rubrics and refine lessons to accommodate all learners. For example, the grade 4 math team reviewed chapter 5 assessment in *Go Math!* and decided to create a different assessment. The team also has been exploring reading and writing in first, second and third person narrative voice. They began by learning to identify pronouns that identify each voice. The team created a task that allowed students to either select first or third person narrative voice and write a narrative from that perspective. The students' next steps is to write a third person narrative and a first person narrative for their research project.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The school uses common assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned to the school's curricula. Checks for understanding, student self-assessments, and actionable feedback to students are evident across classrooms.

Impact
Teachers use assessment data to make effective adjustments to meet all students learning needs and most students are aware of their learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Checks for understanding were observed in some classrooms and teachers circulated and documented student learning. For example, in one class a teacher said "show me thumbs up if you know what you are going to do next?" In another class, the teacher said "thumbs up if you think 7/8 can be simplified?" In another class, teacher asked "How do you know? Turn-and-share with your partners" and then checked in to hear student responses. In a science class, the teacher asked questions to the entire class, such as, "What are the two things we are looking for? What does a delta do? What is another name for a delta? How do different materials affect the makeup of the Earth?" with limited checks for understanding for students.

- The school uses a wide range of data to track student progress. These include i-ready data, *Fountas & Pinnell*, performance assessments in math, science, exit tickets for daily lessons, rubrics and checklists. Teachers use benchmark data to determine student groupings and differentiation. The school uses Engrade, an online grading system where teachers regularly upload students' formative and summative data and other important information. This data is tracked regularly by administrators and teachers to monitor student progress.

- Most work in student's folders showed rubric-based performance level scores with some teacher comments. However, some student work in math had generic next steps. In a grade 5 class, students completed a place value task. A student received a 12/16 on the assignment and given the following meaningful feedback; "You are able to write a number in expanded form. You also did your exponents correctly. You did not show your work or write a complete explanation! Some of your digits are off as well." In a grade 7 math class, one student was given a glow, "Great job solving in step three and writing out your original subtraction problem." Another student was given the following grow, "Don't forget to write out your question for step one."

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

Findings
Teacher teams are engaged in structured professional collaborations and regularly analyze student work through an inquiry approach. Teachers benefit from a variety of distributed leadership opportunities to research effective instructional techniques and play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

Impact
Teacher team collaboration builds distributed leadership capacity and strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers takes turns facilitating the teams they participate in, both grade-level and vertical teams. During the interview, the teachers shared they are formally memorializing the team process this year to include minutes and agendas for all team meetings. Teachers articulated that they focus on reflecting on teaching practice and analyze assessment data to improve student outcomes. For example, teachers discussed that the writing process was a struggle in grades K-2. Additionally, teachers in grade 4 stated that their students are missing basic addition/subtraction facts up to 20.

- The work of teacher teams has resulted in a common instructional approach as well as coherence across grades and content areas. For example, teachers collaborate to change rubrics to ensure standard based consistency based on incorporating more novels into the curriculum. As a result, the team integrated *Junior Great Books* in grade 5 and grade 6.

- Teachers spoke about the vertical team meeting that took place in October. They stated that last year they found a lot of gaps between grades. Word problems and solving multiple step equation are a focus for every grade overall. Teachers spoke about different mediums to view professional development, such as webinars or teacher tube which is a video website that gives teachers the ability to share educational resources. Another teacher stated the need to create a process organizer for steps on how to solve word problems. According to an ELA vertical team meeting that took place in October, teachers set the norms and establish roles. The facilitator leads the meeting, gatekeeper keeps the meeting on task, note-taker records minutes and timekeeper keeps track of time.