



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Children's Workshop School

Elementary School M361

**610 East 12Street
Manhattan
NY 10009**

Principal: Maria Velez Clarke

**Date of review: May 10, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley**

The School Context

The Children's Workshop School is an elementary school with 266 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 10% Asian, 11% Black, 39% Hispanic, and 38% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 21% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.9%.

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 and staff effectively communicate expectations for learning to families. Teacher teams and staff systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations to all students.

Impact

High expectations, teacher guidance and supports ensure that families are partners in their child's education and students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff communicate expectations for learning to families consistently throughout the year. School leadership invites parents in for orientations, curriculum nights and family conferences. Teachers share learning expectations for the year during parent orientations and share specific lessons and grade level goals during curriculum nights. Grade level teachers send home monthly newsletters that outline the current units of study for families. Teachers provide parents with progress reports in January and June that include levels of achievement for targeted skills and a narrative report for each of the core content areas, personal growth and work habits. Parents interviewed shared that the progress report is a comprehensive report of their child's academic and social growth. One parent stated "When you read the report you feel like the school knows your child academically and socially."
- Parents shared that the school provides a variety of supports for their children that are adapted to meet their learning needs. One parent of a student with an individual education plan shared that the supports provided to her son have allowed him to move to a less restrictive learning environment and helped him to find his passion for realistic fiction. Parents also shared the variety of ways they partner with the school to support their own and other students in the school. Parents present have attended workshops on math skills and Common Core Learning Standards and are members of both the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and School Leadership Team (SLT). Parents chaperone school trips, organize school events and have worked with the SLT and PTA to write and receive a variety of grants that have purchased books and funded music, band and exercise programs, school trips, renovations, air conditioning and staff retreats.
- Teachers and staff systematically communicate high expectations to all students by providing students with clear and consistent feedback on their work and including students in discussions of their strengths and areas for growth on a regular basis. Teachers support students in owning their learning experiences and clearly outline expectations for performance during learning. Across grades, experiential learning plays a key role in the social studies curriculum and students have "Trip Sheets" for each trip that outlines the learning objectives of the trip and what students should look for and accomplish by the trips' end. Students play a key role in "family conferences." Students complete self-assessments before each conference and identify strengths and next steps for learning in each content area. Students use self-assessments to set new learning goals with their parents and teachers during conferences. Student data reveals a 91% pass rate for grade 5 students in their grade 6 classes in math, English, social studies and science.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Assessment data provides teachers with actionable feedback that is used to adjust curricula and instruction and determine progress toward goals, however, assessment practices have yet to track student progress across core subjects, hindering teachers' ability to offer a clear portrait of student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to each unit of study. Rubrics align to the levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 used on report cards and progress reports. Rubrics are content specific and usually include a student assessment component and teacher written feedback. Students use feedback on their work to make revisions to drafts, identify next steps and improve the level of their work. Students interviewed clearly articulated ways in which they improved their work based on teacher feedback. A grade 3 student shared that he now understands how to break up a complicated figure and find the area based on his teacher's feedback. A grade 2 student shared that she is working on adding characters and more word bubbles to her writing to make it more interesting.
- Teachers use pre, post and mid-unit assessments to determine student progress in each content area. Teachers also administer *Fountas and Pinnell* running records across the grades to monitor reading progress. Teachers use data from common English Language Arts and *Fountas and Pinnell* assessments to place students into instructional groups for guided reading and strategy lessons. Data from math unit assessments is used to create homogeneous small groups for targeted math skills. Based on the data from unit assessments this year teachers created homogeneous groups for targeted instruction in geometry, addition and subtraction.
- Teachers make adjustments to student groupings, instructional tools and supports based on student performance data. Teachers create graphic organizers that scaffold in difficulty to address the varied levels of support needed by their students and bring in manipulatives and activities to support the visual and kinesthetic learner. Teachers incorporate math manipulatives, dry erase materials and experiential learning trips to support student comprehension of difficult concepts. Teachers in the early grades incorporate *Foundations* techniques like tapping out sounds and magnetic letters to support students struggling with phonics and across the grades teachers have incorporated "number talks" to get students talking about their thinking in math. Across grades teachers use assessment data to determine student progress in English Language Arts (ELA) and math and make effective adjustments to curriculum and instruction, however, assessment practices have yet to track student progress across all core subjects, hindering the ability to create a clear picture of student progress in all content areas.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula and tasks are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Purposeful curricular decisions build coherence across grades and subjects and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty utilize units of study for English Language Arts (ELA), math, science and social studies that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. The ELA curriculum is adapted from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Program, the math curriculum aligns to the *EngageNY* curriculum with supplements from *TERC* (Technical Education Research Centers) and *Investigations*. The social studies and science curriculum units are developed by teachers and align to the New York Scope and Sequence for social studies and science. Teachers supplement the social studies curriculum with grade level trips and corresponding trip sheets and the science curriculum incorporates FOSS (Full Option Science System) modules for scientific investigations. Teachers align the units of study to the Common Core Learning Standards using a backwards mapping approach during teacher retreats and grade level meetings. Teachers create curriculum overviews for each grade that outline the unit concepts and learning expectations in each of the core content areas. A math unit states that students be able to add and subtract 3-digit numbers using different strategies, multiply and divide numbers up to 100 and know basic multiplication facts up to 10×10 by the end of the unit.
- Across grades and content areas, lesson plans include learning objectives, essential questions, subject content, key vocabulary or “words to know” and plans for grouping, extensions and conferencing with students. A math lesson includes the learning objective to use symbolic letter notation to represent the value of one variable in terms of another and explains the content as follows: Students will build a rectangular array with rows of three tiles and examine the relationship between the number of rows and the number of tiles. Students will describe their methods for finding the total number of tiles for up to 100 rows. This lesson also includes an extension for some students to write an expression in terms of x . The inclusion of key components across lessons builds coherence across grades and content areas.
- Across content areas curricula provides evidence of a focus on academic vocabulary, coherence and deep understanding in alignment with the instructional shifts in ELA and math. Lessons require students to utilize content vocabulary and terms in their tasks and responses and provide opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and share their thinking. A geometry lesson requires students to review their geometry vocabulary by comparing different shapes noticing their similarities and difference and using geometric terms to talk about the shapes with a partner. A poetry lesson requires students to use their developing understanding of free verse poetry and what they know about poetry line breaks and white space to reorganize an existing poem and create a new poem. The poetry lesson plan includes a support chart entitled “Toolboxes we can use to revise our free verse poetry.”

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

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

Impact

Alignment to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* ensures high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership shared articulated beliefs around how students learn best that include peer-to-peer discussion, the use of academic vocabulary, high level teacher questions and students grouped for discussion. Across classrooms teachers grouped students for small group and partner discussions. Academic vocabulary was present in classrooms on walls, charts and in student notebooks, journals and personal dictionaries. Teachers asked high level questions and moved around classrooms to support students, push their thinking and encourage students to share their thinking with their peers. In a grade 5 classroom, the teacher moved to each group asking them to explain what they were noticing about their tile patterns and to identify an equation that would explain the relationship. One student shared that her pattern is linear because it increases by three tiles in each row. Another student shared that the number of tiles is equal to the number of rows multiplied by three. The teacher then pushed one group to determine how many tiles would be required to build up to ten rows without using the tiles provided. The students in the small group created the equation and explained their reasoning.
- Across classrooms visited, student work products and discussions demonstrated high levels of thinking. In a writing lesson, students created free verse poems by reorganizing poems they created the day before. Students thought carefully about the use of white space and line breaks to alter their poems for impact. Students engaged in this lesson shared that free verse poems let you play with poetry because they have no rules and they don't have to rhyme. Students cut their poems apart and used the white space on their desks to change the impact the poem will have on the reader. In a math lesson, students summarized their learning in their math journals and shared how working with a partner supported their thinking. One student wrote, "I first thought that estimating is when you just guess a number. After I talked with my partner, I thought, you have to guess the most possible number that makes the most sense."
- Across classrooms visited there were high levels of student participation. Students worked collaboratively in small groups and shared their thinking freely with their peers. In a science lesson the teachers incorporated technology to support students in conducting research on the understory layer of the rainforest. Students in this classroom were highly engaged and moved independently to collect laptops and writing materials for their research. Students supported one another in their internet search and collected information on the understory that would be shared with the class. In a social studies classroom, the teacher assigned students to reading groups based on performance levels. In groups students reviewed their texts to make predictions about the character's lives and recorded their questions or predictions in their journals. The level of thinking and participation present in the science and social studies classrooms was present across most classrooms visited.

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 collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals. Distributive leadership structures build leadership capacity.

Impact

Professional collaboration and leadership opportunities strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and gives them voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level teams meet monthly to analyze student work and identify strengths and weaknesses in each of the core subject areas. Teachers use team meetings to plan next steps for instruction that support student learning and promote the achievement of school goals. The grade 1 and 2 team identified next steps which include a focus on increasing student vocabulary, teaching the appropriate use of content vocabulary words in writing and the use of correct verb tenses. Teachers also identified a focus on the use of math prompts that encourage students to reflect on their thinking in math. Prompts for students include, “I learned, a challenge for me was, and I need to work on...” Teachers also meet vertically to analyze curriculum and more closely align it to the Common Core State Standards, as well as, coordinate instruction across grades and align grade level expectations for students.
- School leaders and teachers shared that teacher teamwork has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers. School leadership shared that teachers are more open to looking at student data as a way of assessing the impact of instruction. Teachers shared that teacher teamwork has developed their ability to talk about teaching as a practice that can be improved. One teacher shared that looking at student work with her colleagues has improved her notetaking during student conferences because she is better at identifying student strengths and areas of need. Another teacher noted that working as a team has built confidence in teaching because “if something is not working, we can come together to fix it and adjust the instruction.”
- Structures are in place that has built leadership capacity among teachers. Teachers sit on the school leadership team, facilitate professional learning sessions, lead teacher team meetings and sit on a variety of school teams focused on school improvement including the technology, special education and grant writing team. Teachers have worked with families to raise funds that support the variety of social studies trips that are a viable component of the school’s curricula. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that impact student learning and have played a critical part in the development of a variety of school wide practices including, the staff retreat, progress reports, family conferences and the collaborative development of student learning goals.