



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Teachers College Community School

Elementary School M517

**168 Morningside Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10027**

Principal: Michelle Verdiner

**Date of review: May 26, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

Teachers College Community School is an elementary school with 266 students from prekindergarten through grade 4. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 6% Asian, 39% Black, 28% Hispanic, and 20% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 12% 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 94.8%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

Communication and professional development around high expectations results in a culture of mutual accountability. Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent classroom observations and feedback from administrators based on Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* contain specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating, and actionable next steps. These are then addressed in subsequent classroom observations. All observations, along with the professional development delivered to teachers catered to teacher need as evidenced by observation data that is tracked in a central document maintained by school leadership in order to ensure effective training for staff. For instance, documents show that a teacher, who earned a developing in November 2015, in the area of using assessment in instruction, subsequently received professional development through individualized sessions with school leadership as well as targeted intervisitations with colleagues. This teacher earned a rating of effective in this area during a classroom observation that took place in April 2016.
- Teachers hold each other accountable to instructional expectations through frequent intervisitations. One teacher reported, "I used to struggle with the length of my mini-lessons and pacing in general. After visiting a few colleagues, I've learned to tighten my mini-lessons." Another teacher reported, "I'm the general education teacher for an Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) class and we were trying parallel teaching and had trouble managing it. But then we visited a few classes here and seeing it in action helped us so much." Additionally, teachers expect that school leadership will use the data gathered from classroom observations to direct teachers toward visiting colleagues that have evidenced strong practice in areas where development is needed. One teacher reported, "After an assessment, the principal will tell me where I should go, and often teachers come to observe me based on her feedback to them. I'm now giving better feedback and doing better because of the feedback I am getting."
- Expectations are effectively communicated with parents through newsletters, the school website, and at coffee and tea sessions between school leadership and parents, as well as through weekly packets sent to parents that share the instructional focus and all homework assignments for the coming week. One parent said, "The packets help me prepare for the questions my daughter always asks me. Because I read and use them, I help my daughter get to 'aha' moments." Another parent added, "It's nice to be able to go through the homework with my daughter and be prepared for that because I've been prepared by the school. It really helps my daughter so much!"

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams analyze assessment data for students they share.

Impact

Use of an inquiry approach is developing across teacher teams. Analysis of assessment data does not typically result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams have engaged in work related to the development of coherent teaching strategies. Minutes from teacher team meetings reveal that teachers are planning together, investigating ways to modify station learning designs and differentiation strategies. Additionally, intervisitations are planned during these meetings.
- Review of grade 2 teacher team agendas and minutes reveal that work they have conducted around students' comprehension of combinations of numbers equaling 10 has set the foundation for inquiry work. The use of a data tracking graphic organizer titled "I Know These Facts Like I Know My Name" provides data that shows the dates on which students mastered certain number combinations equaling 10. However, this tool has not yet been used to identify a target group of students that share a common deficiency with the goal of creating the interventions that will assist these and future students.
- Grade 4 teacher team documentation evidences that team's work toward designing and refining student work protocols, unpacking standards for future units, norming on assessments, and the art of using formative assessments to restructure in-class student groups. Team meeting agendas and minutes also reveal that this team has met to analyze English Language Arts (ELA) writing data. However, no information is provided under the column titled "Next Steps." Additionally, in January this team met to examine mid-chapter quiz data in order to determine which standards to re-teach during the unit on division. The discussion of this led to finding that students were struggling with multi-step work problems involving multiple operations and a next-step decision "to integrate more multi-step word problems into our unit for the next two weeks." However, review of agendas and minutes from this team's meetings in February and March did not reveal any follow-up on this specific endeavor or the issuance of an assessment specifically designed to gauge its impact on student achievement.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact

Coherent curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and tasks cognitively engage students.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curricular documents across grades evidences purposeful decisions to infuse *TERC Investigations in Numbers, Data and Space* math curriculum with *EngageNY* math modules of study. For ELA, the school uses *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project*. After conducting a thorough analysis of NY State math exam data, it was revealed that math curriculum taught in prior years did not cover all of the Common Core Learning Standards. In response, with the assistance of an instructional coach from Teachers College at Columbia University, school leaders and faculty conducted a review of the math curricula across all grades. This work identified the specific standards that were not addressed at all as well as those that were covered minimally, adequately, or overly. Prior to the start of this school year, all math curricula were adjusted to ensure alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards.
- Evidence shows multiple examples of the infusion of instructional shifts in curricular documents. In a grade 2 writing task, students are to summarize any one of five different non-fiction articles and include two pieces of textual evidence to support their summaries. In a grade 3 social studies unit, students are tasked with analyzing resources and peoples' access to them and write a proposal to the mayor of NYC in which the student will advocate for increasing peoples' access to that resource, citing specific pieces of evidence to support their arguments. In a grade 5 science unit, students are engaged with writing an informative essay that describes what is happening to rain forests. In this essay, students are expected to use evidence in the forms of graphs, charts, definitions, or quotations to support their work. A grade 3 lesson included activities designed to build and support students' fluency with taking data and creating bar graphs.
- A diversity of learners benefit from consistent emphasis on rigorous tasks and higher-order skills. In a grade 4 social studies lesson plan students are to research the three branches of the United States' federal government and synthesize the information learned into a presentation that includes an analysis as to the benefits and detriments to having three separate branches. This work is supported by heterogeneous student groupings for ELL students, and using graphic organizers differentiated for students with disabilities. A grade 4 lesson plan has students analyze the poem *The New Colossus* by Emma Lazarus for each stanza. The task includes seven guiding questions followed by the higher-level synthesizing question "Once you determine the purpose of each stanza, ask yourself, 'Why is this information important'?"

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs informed by the instructional shifts that fosters higher order thinking. Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices reflect an articulated set of beliefs informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. All learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching practices reflected the school's believe that students learn best when they are placed in small groups that have been purposefully designed. In a grade 2 ELA lesson, each of the five groups were designed based on running records data. Each group was assigned to read a work of non-fiction specifically geared to students' need. In a grade 4 math class, students were organized into homogenous groups. In a grade 4 ELA lesson, students were grouped heterogeneously while one group was specifically designed to include one ELL student, one former ELL student along with a non-ELL student fluent in the home language of the ELL student. All groups had a graphic organizer to help focus their work in analysis of *The New Colossus* by Emma Lazarus. Above the graphic organizer were seven focus questions students could use that served as an entry into the task. These questions challenged students to examine the stanza to find cause or effect, determine if the stanza answers a question, offers an example, paints a picture, or tries to persuade, etc.
- Across classrooms, students were engaged and conducted targeted turn-and-talk conversations with partners to further their learning. In a grade 4 ELA lesson, students were directed to turn-and-talk about their interpretation of the final stanza of *The New Colossus* by Emma Lazarus. In a grade 3 writing lesson, students conducted turn-and-talk conversations around each step they would take in their writing of fairy tales. In a grade 4 math lesson, students talked with partners while they considered the best method to determine the measurements of specific angles.
- Multiple entry points allowed all learners access to the material. In a grade 2 ELA lesson, differentiated supports such as graphic organizers and a variety of readings such as, non-fiction pieces dealing with the biology of an eyeball, football safety, new planets being found, as well as one piece on the pros and cons of freeing whales that had lived in captivity, were made available for each student group. In a grade 1 math lesson, each table group had a folder that contained the graphic organizer students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, were to use along with extension activities for students completing their work early.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics aligned with the school’s curricula. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback regarding their achievement. Data from common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Some examples were: “Can you name all the benchmark angles and tell me how many degrees they are?”, and “Next time, explain your evidence so the reader will understand why the details are important.” One student said, “Whenever we get an assignment, we always get the glows and grows the next day.” Another student added, “I always do my work over again with the grows and hand it back in.”
- Across classrooms, rubrics and self- and peer- assessments written on post-it notes, are used as tools of supports for student growth. Rubrics and checklists have been individualized to specific assignments as well as the different target audiences for which they are designed. Across grades and subjects, rubrics asked students to self-assess and set goals. Postings across classrooms indicated that student groups were based on assessment data while at other times they were based on writing, reading, or math goals.
- School leaders conducted an analysis of students’ *Fountus and Pinnell* reading levels and found that while students were reading at a high level, analysis of New York State (NYS) math exam data revealed that students were deficient in a great variety of skills, such as solving multi-step problems and explaining mathematical processes in written form. Investigation into the disconnect between these two school wide data findings revealed that student programs contained only one period of math instruction per day. This resulted in the adjustment of programming to reflect a 100% increase in math instruction. Concurrently, school leaders and teachers decided to begin using the Common Core aligned *EngageNY* units of study alongside targeted units from the non-aligned curricula used prior to this school year, *TERC Investigations in Numbers, Data, and Space*.