Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 011 Kathryn Phelan

Elementary School Q011

54-25 Skillman Avenue
Queens
NY 11377

Principal: Elizabeth Pena-Jorge

Date of review: February 11, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart

The School Context

P.S. 011 Kathryn Phelan is an elementary school with 1,179 students from grade kindergarten through grade 6. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 38% Asian, 2% Black, 49% Hispanic, and 9% White students. The student body includes 25% English Language Learners and 17% 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 95.3%.

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	**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 *Framework for Teaching*, 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		
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	**Additional Findings**	**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	**Celebration**	**Well Developed**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

All teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that have strengthened instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers play an integral role in school wide instructional decisions.

Impact

There is instructional coherence and improved student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- In one teacher team meeting, teachers discussed methods to help their early childhood students become adept at writing letters and words, such as using the sand table or tracing magnetic tiles. They focused on sharing strategies they had utilized to build sight word recognition. One teacher continually added challenging words to the vocabulary list and noted that she has seen improvement in reading and writing levels. "I had a student who couldn't write at all at the beginning of the year, now he is writing sentences." Another teacher stated that one of her students has improved from *Fountas and Pinnell* level E to level L.

- Teacher teams meet regularly and in addition to discussing teaching strategies, they analyze student performance data. Minutes of the meetings from a teacher team show that the team created rubrics for specific performance tasks and implemented a variety of instructional strategies for improving student writing. They reviewed student work to determine the success of the strategies and made revisions to their instructional plans. (a)

- Teachers participate in a six-week cycle of inquiry that begins with a survey to identify small groups of three or four teachers interested in a common topic, such as writing or implementing *Go Math!* Each team provides feedback to the school leaders that includes the next steps the teachers will take to improve student achievement. During one team meeting, the teachers decided to use dominoes to help students with disabilities develop understanding of addition.

- During an inter-visitation at a neighboring school, teachers saw a writing strategy and proposed that it be piloted in the second grade. School leaders agreed with the recommendation of the teachers and the program is in the early stages of implementation.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure curricular materials are aligned to the Common Core and integrate the instructional shifts. Most lessons emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Purposeful decisions promote college and career readiness skills for all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Most, but not all, lesson plans outline how the integration of the instructional shifts will be differentiated for groups of learners. One lesson plan describes how one group will focus on identifying text details to illustrate a character trait, a second group will identify three events to support their claims about the character's behavior, and a third group will create their own scene based on the book, *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*. In a grade 5 English Language Arts class, the teacher had chosen articles at various reading levels that different groups of students would read to prepare for a flash debate on whether chocolate milk should be served in schools. Lesson plans for integrated co-teaching classes include some grouping for explicit differentiation for reading levels.

- Grade-level teams create vertical literacy curriculum maps that include the same genres for all grades, but the order of the genres may be different depending on the grade. For example, the early grade teachers decided to begin the year with a personal narrative writing unit in order to learn more about their students while the upper grades decided to begin with informative writing.

- Lesson plans provide opportunities for students to turn and talk or to work cooperatively. In one science lesson, students will actively share their ideas about the impact a dam would have on the ecosystem. Lesson handouts include an outline of a community meeting with different points of view regarding the dam's impact for the students to analyze and discuss.

- Imagine Learning, an online literacy program, has been implemented for new English Language Learner students in the upper grades. Across the school, there is a focus on improving writing and developing grade-wide writing tasks. The school leaders have provided additional fiction and biography libraries for the classrooms to support the writing program, but have not yet focused on non-fiction titles.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula and tasks are rigorous.

Impact
All learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in challenging tasks. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and teachers are focusing on incorporating higher-order questioning into instruction. The assistant principals have noted that the frequency of such questions is improving in both lesson plans and in actual classroom instruction. In a first grade math class, students were asked to explain how they knew a word problem involved addition instead of subtraction and cited the vocabulary clues from the text to support their answers.

- During a turn and talk activity in an English Language Arts class, students made predictions about characters from *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.* One student told her partner that she thinks about the things the character has done in the past, such as get into a lot of trouble, to predict that he will continue to make a mess. Another student predicted, "He [Fudge] is going to crash and make a big, giant mess." In a self-contained grade 3 and 4 class, students also predicted what might happen in a story based on the title and cover illustration of *The Recess Queen*.

- Students were observed using a variety of problem solving strategies in an early childhood math class and were grouped accordingly. For example, in a first grade class students were illustrating addition by modeling the problems on a wipe off board or using different colored linking cubes. The teacher grouped some of the students according to their need for tasks that are more challenging than others because they would benefit from larger-sized manipulatives.

- One teacher had students interpret documents from a town hall meeting to determine what point of view they might take on an issue of importance to the community. While discussing what happens when humans interact with an animal habitat, a fourth grade student stated, "If you build it for the animals, they don't know how to build it themselves so their children don't know how to do it."

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Teachers use common assessments to determine progress toward goals and their assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
The results of analysis of assessments are used to adjust curricular choices and instruction to meet student needs.

Supporting Evidence
- To improve performance of English Language Learners, teachers created science vocabulary lists in Spanish for home use and found that performance on the grade 4 New York State Elementary Level Science Test for English Language Learners improved. In 2014, 72% of English Language Learners scored at Level 3 or 4 on the grade 4 State science assessment. In 2015, the percentage had risen to 83% scoring at Level 3 or 4.

- Teachers administer *Fountas and Pinnell* reading assessments and track student growth toward meeting their grade level reading goals. The first grade inquiry team determined at the beginning of the year that 70% of first grade students read below grade level. They decided to use *Fundations* in literacy centers and for groups of students with low instructional reading levels.

- After a baseline assessment was administered in December, a teacher noted that a student in grade 4 was strong in decoding, but needed more work in content area vocabulary and comprehension of fiction and informational texts. As a result of this analysis, the teacher had the student begin reading science and social studies texts as part of a group using vocabulary flash cards. The student will be reassessed in March and June to determine progress. Another student began using a personalized math vocabulary list to help him meet his goal of improving in solving math word problems.

- Some teachers use Plickers, to gather information about student understanding during lessons. The students indicate their answers by holding up a card that is scanned using a smart phone. Students were then regrouped for follow up instruction based on the results of the pop quiz administered in this manner.

- Students use self- and peer-editing checklists to evaluate their work. The checklists are created for each grade and some are crafted for specific tasks. A revising checklist in grade 1 includes items such as, "Did you add details that describe actions, thoughts, and feelings?" A narrative poem checklist in grade 4 has prompts aimed at improving the way the poem looks, sounds, and uses language.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders effectively communicate with parents and partner with them to support student achievement. There is a strong culture for learning that is based on uniformly high expectations for all students to strive for improved achievement.

Impact
Families support their children to achieve college and career readiness and students understand their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence
- The school surveyed parents in English and Spanish at the beginning of the year to determine what information they wanted to learn regarding the special education services available at the school. Responses included requests for workshops on the transition from special education to general education and how parents can help children with reading, writing, and math at home. In addition to holding workshops on how to understand the IEP, the school held workshops during which parents received information to help them push their child's reading comprehension by asking them to predict what will happen next or to ask if they have ever felt like the character in the story and why. One workshop for parents addressed "how to encourage your child to advance in education."

- Grade 5 and 6 students serve as reading buddies with early grade students in a co-located school, while the upper grade students in the main building partner with the younger students in that location. Teachers noted that the program has helped struggling students realize they can reach goals for their behavior and advance their skill building. One student wrote, "I like being a role model." The student newsletter, *The P.S. 11 Planet*, reported that a grade 4 student said that this program gave her the chance to "work on creating questions to help her partner understand the story."

- The school supports parents and students in the articulation to middle school. In addition to organizing visits to middle schools, the guidance counselor meets with students and parents in grade 5 and 6 to discuss options for middle school applications.

- A parent noted that she appreciates the strategies her child is learning to use to help her overcome learning disabilities and build her confidence. She added that these strategies are giving her child self-esteem and motivating her to aspire to college. Another parent stated that her child's teacher instills a sense of responsibility leading her child to recognize he must be on time and do his homework. A student noted that in order to achieve a level 4 on independent reading, it is necessary to read and log at least 500 minutes a month. She added that it was also necessary to have "a balance between fiction and non-fiction texts."

- The school participates in programs at Woodside on the Move, a community-based organization that celebrates the diversity of the community and which helps immigrant students and their families transition to their new neighborhood.