



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. Q016 The Nancy DeBenedittis School

Elementary School Q016

**41-15 104 Street
Queens
NY 11368**

Principal: Elaine Iodice

**Date of review: March 18, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Terrell**

The School Context

P.S. Q016 The Nancy DeBenedittis School is an elementary school with 1,710 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 8% Asian, 0% Black, 91% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 42% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.1%.

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	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 <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	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	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:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

A vast majority of teachers use multiple assessments aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers use ongoing checks for understanding and students self-reflect on their learning goals.

Impact

Teachers and students have meaningful information regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments and students are able to articulate their next learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- At the beginning of the school year, all teachers receive a benchmark assessment schedule. The schedule outlines by grade and month the assessments that will be administered throughout the school year for all students including assessments for English Language Learners (ELL's). In math, teachers administer *GO Math!* benchmark assessments, and in English Language Arts (ELA), *Fountas and Pinnell* (F&P) running records to determine reading levels. Teachers also use end-of-unit tests and analysis of State assessments in ELA and math, as well as *ReadyGen* performance-based assessments. The staff uses the District 24 grading policy as a measure to compare students' work across the school and to provide feedback that uses the same language. An analysis of F&P data in grade 4 reflect an increase in students' reading levels across the grade from October 2015 to February 2016. The Imagine Learning summary report, which tracks students' literacy skills, shows an increase in students' decoding and comprehension skills.
- Fountas and Pinnell data is analyzed across the school by grade and sub-groups four times a year. This analysis informed the decision to provide an after-school program for students in the bottom third in ELA for grades 3 through 5. Also, a decision was made to purchase Raz-Kids, an online reading support program, for struggling readers in grade 2. An assessment of the school's dual language and non-dual language grade 3 classes showed that on the ELA assessment, students who participated in the dual language program scored proficient by a percentage 33% over non-dual language students. Data analysis is used to select students for academic interventions services (AIS), Response to Interventions (RtI), and after-school programs. Additionally, classroom teachers use the school's Google App for Education (GAPE) to review real-time data for students receiving RtI services. This data allows teachers to determine programming for students and tiered supports. The school uses data from the Imagine Learning online literacy program to design tasks around decoding, word recognition, letter names, and sounds to support their ELL students.
- Teachers use clipboards to note students' ongoing comprehension and learning. Quick checks are conducted after math lessons and identified students are provided small group instruction and modified homework. Students articulated their goals and what their next steps were. For example, one student shared that her writing goal is to use more details. Writing rubrics provide students with criteria-based feedback on the quality of their work. Additionally, students use self-reflection checklists as guide to bring their writing to the next level.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school there is an articulated belief on how students learn best, aligned to the *Danielson Framework* for Teaching. Students' work products and discussion reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

The school's articulated belief on how students learn best pushes high levels of student thinking which is moving students toward owning their learning through rich discussions and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership articulates that students learn best through active cognitive engagement, "minds on" learning aligned to the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. The principal shared that the spotlight is on the students and that the students "have to give it back to you." Across classrooms, the instructional focus is displayed as, "It's Time to Show What You Know!" In classrooms observed, questions were posted such as, "What are you working on? Learning?", "How is this important to your learning?", "How do you know you are doing it well?", and "What do you do when you need help?" These posted instructional questions are fostering a process of leading students in discussions that illustrate ownership, across all classrooms.
- In a grade 4 class, students were observed collaborating in groups, designing five questions based on a non-fiction biography of Thomas Edison. One group worked on writing a question with a multiple-choice format. For example, "What is the main idea of the passage?" They then recorded four choices: (a) He was born on February 11, 1847. (b) He was the president. (c) He was a famous inventor. (d) He died with diabetes. Students engaged in discussions to create questions to "stump" other groups. In a grade 3 classroom, students worked together in small groups to decide on a strategy to use to solve problems on fractions. While the teacher worked with one group, other groups worked independently on solving the problems at their tables. Students working on the computer had to decide on a strategy to compare fractions. During the share out, students were asked to state what strategy was most helpful to them and why. One student shared that using fractions strips was the most helpful to him because he could check his answer. Another shared that she solved the problem by drawing a picture. In many classrooms students' work and participation reflected high levels of thinking, however, in a few classrooms, pedagogy did not support students' engagement in peer-to-peer discussions. For example, in a third grade science class, focused on investigating simple machines, the teacher introduced vocabulary words and gave each group a plastic spoon and a Styrofoam ball, but there were no specific directions provided to guide them in discussions, completing the task, or creating questions in their groups.
- In a lower grade class with ELL students, the teacher held up picture cards to retell the sequence of events in the book *The Snowy Day*. Students listened but were not asked to discuss what they observed. The teacher concluded the lesson by holding up her fingers to show the sequence for the word cards. In a special education classroom, students watched a video about landforms. The teacher asked the class, "Have you been on a hill?" The teacher then answered the question stating that she had been on a hill in Central Park in New York City.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings 1.1

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Teachers use data to plan and refine the curricula and tasks for all students.

Impact

There is a coherent curriculum across grades that promotes cognitive engagement and acquisition of college and career readiness skills for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Three years ago, the school made a purposeful decision to implement the *ReadyGen* ELA curriculum, specifically because it supported literacy and the instructional shifts, particularly non-fiction reading. *GO Math!* was chosen because of its emphasis on problem solving skills and fluency development in math. Teachers develop curriculum maps aligned to *ReadyGen* and *GO Math!* and have access to trade books, text collections, and grade-level scope and sequence documents. In addition, students are provided services through five dual language classes, one on each grade level to support students' cognitive development in English and their home language. Three visual arts teachers were hired to support the *Blueprint for the Arts* curricula implementation.
- Teachers have modified the structure of *ReadyGen* lessons by incorporating a workshop model to focus more support through strategy-based lessons. The Read 365 program has been implemented within the curricula to provide students with more access to texts on their reading levels as well as more complex texts. Also, the school has augmented the literacy curricula online programs with Raz-Kids, specifically targeting struggling readers in grade 2, and with Imagine Learning for ELL students. Additionally, a review of school-wide data revealed that the bottom third was struggling with making inferences. Consequently, teachers recommended supports for this group by providing targeted interventions using Raz-Kids and Imagine for ELLs. Also, teachers use data to differentiate math stations, such as providing activities to encourage discourse and mathematical vocabulary.
- Grade 1 teachers modified a *ReadyGen* unit map to push students in doing close reads, requiring students to find details that convey setting and characters' emotions. Then, in partnerships, students chart details and independently sketch and compose descriptive writing pieces. In a grade 2 class with ELL students, the teacher created her own slides and lesson with visuals and step-by-step directions with specific strategies to meet the needs of her students who could not yet comprehend longer *ReadyGen* text passages. To support students' writing development with details students were asked to ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of key details in, "Theodore Roosevelt: The Adventurous President," responding to questions such as, "What are some important events in the person's life?", "What are the accomplishments of this person?", and "How has this person affected our world or our lives?" One slide prompted students to turn their "JOTS" into paragraphs, and to remember to indent and start with a capital letter when starting a paragraph.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school leadership consistently communicates high expectations aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to all staff. School leaders and staff use a variety of resources and supports to partner with families to communicate high expectation for their children.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability among the staff. Families partner with the school to support their child’s progress toward college and career readiness skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and administrative staff members conduct walkthroughs constantly to observe the instructional program and provide teachers with feedback aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. For example, in alignment to 3b questioning and discussion in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, feedback to a teacher stated, “You asked this student to justify his thinking and find evidence in the text... Can you show me where it shows that?” and asked higher order thinking questions, such as “What was the author’s message?” In addition, each staff member is provided a staff handbook, which outlines expectations across the school and by grades. Teachers participate in a variety of professional learning opportunities during the extended Monday professional development sessions receiving training in areas such as, *GO Math!*, pacing, curriculum mapping, college and career readiness, *Fountas and Pinnell* assessments, Google Docs, and cycles of inquiry. Teachers are targeted to facilitate the various professional trainings conducted at the school. The principal also provides a monthly calendar that includes communication to with on how well they are meeting goals and expectations.
- Teachers engage in *Lunch and Learns*, as well as in training on the use of thinking maps such as circle, bubble, tree, and brace maps. After training, a teacher’s evaluative exit ticket stated, “I better understand how to use various maps and will use the maps in my planning and learning.” Another exit ticket stated, “I am going to incorporate each map differently and through all content areas.” Additionally, the school’s coaches meet with teachers to offer supports to plan and review lessons, schedule inter-visitations to focus on a teaching a skill or concept, and provide one-on-one meetings to support balanced literacy practices or *ReadyGen* curriculum implementation.
- Through a grant, the school partners with New York City Arts to offer families of early grade students six dance classes with their children. Families present stories of cultural heritage through dance at the conclusion of the sessions. Through the Parents as Partners Program (PAPP) parents participate in workshops targeting kindergarten and first grade English as a New Language (ENL) students. This year, the school has introduced the *Let’s Read Program* for parents of students whose promotion is in doubt. Families are provided accounts to support their children at home with literacy and math through Raz-Kids, Mathletics, BrainPOP, and Sumdog online programs. Monthly calendars are provided to all parents via the principal, parent coordinator, and PTA. A series of workshops on writing mechanics, sentence writing, and picture writing supports families in helping their children improve their writing skills. The school provides workshops on the middle school articulation process to support families with completing applications and their knowledge of college and career readiness.

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

The majority of teachers participate in professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work using an inquiry approach.

Impact

Teacher capacity has expanded. There is documented progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- This year all teachers are participating in structured inquiry teams on Mondays during the extended day. Teacher teams work in cycles of inquiry for six to eight weeks following the District’s model for successful cycles of inquiry. During week one of each cycle, teachers are required to identify a problem of practice. During weeks two and three, they research the problem and identify two to three strategies to use with students. The following three weeks, they implement the selected strategies. During week seven, they discuss the success of the implementation, measuring achievement. Finally, during week eight, teachers engage in discussions to close the cycle out, such as how the bottom third is improving comprehension skills through the use of Raz-Kids, a literacy intervention, used in the afterschool program for this targeted group of students. In addition, The Imagine Learning program shows improvements in comprehension for ELL’s across the school.
- The data specialist provides teams with supports on topics that teachers have expressed an interest in, such as student learning: Compliant vs. Engaged Learners; Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques; Writing Quality Individualized Educational Plans (IEP’s): Writing and monitoring rigorous goals including student and parent voice. In a special education self-contained team, the group stated its problem of practice as, “Based upon student work samples and teacher observations, students with disabilities struggle to work independently during writing tasks.” The Measure of Success was the Teachers’ College rubric, which reflected students using more details in their writing. The change strategy used was, incorporate oral storytelling inside of writer’s workshop. Student writing samples show an improvement in their writing.
- During a mixed-grade special education inquiry team meeting, teachers focused on a fifth grade student, discussing pertinent personal information, and the student reading level, and assessment data that indicated that the student had difficulty writing a summary with details. Team members suggested instructional strategies such as posting prompting questions on the board and teaching chunking of text. The team referenced next goals on a rubric and discussed how to monitor progress. Additionally, the team discussed how to create IEP goals aligned to the Common Core Standards based on areas of need such as how students recognize and express how a character responds to struggle or change. The team shared that they have difficulty getting on the same page and creating a common language, as they do not have enough time to meet.