



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 026 Rufus King

Elementary School Q026

**195-02 69 Avenue
Queens
NY 11365**

Principal: Andrew Pecorella

**Date of review: February 10, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

The School Context

P.S. 026 Rufus King is an elementary school with 672 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 61% Asian, 10% Black, 16% Hispanic, and 11% White students. The student body includes 10% 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 95.6%.

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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrates the instructional shifts, supporting rigor in the classroom. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are embedded across grades and subjects.

Impact

As a result, students have access to rigorous curricula that are coherent across subjects and grades and require students to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have engaged in a rigorous process of curriculum development aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. An examination of unit plans indicate that they closely meet the needs of individual students, using rigorous content, critical thinking and problem solving skills with a Teachers College component specifically for the writing process across grades, along with a pilot of a Teachers College curriculum for kindergarten. The English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum incorporates Common Core-aligned *Wonders Reading* units, and *Old Treasures* which integrates grammar into the writing curriculum. The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* is employed through student-led discussions and an increased level of engagement as stated in team meetings. Preloaded vocabulary, student checklists, and student self-reflection rubrics are used across grades and subject areas. All content area teachers use strategies and modifications to ensure all students, high and low performing, have access to tasks to promote intellectual engagement. Additional services are embedded into the curriculum to ensure that the lowest third students in grades 4 and 5 have access to utilize higher-order skills and are challenged to think critically.
- The New York City K-8 Scope and Sequence is used in social studies and science and Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* questions are embedded in lesson plans. In math, *My Math* has been supplemented with *Exemplars* and word problems aligned to units at differing levels, requiring students to demonstrate fluency, application and deep understanding of mathematical concepts. There is a consistent focus on academic vocabulary and coherence in math concepts. Foundational skills are applied with a focus on multiple ways to solve problems and express in writing. All teachers have implemented a questioning and discourse protocol in math in order to study specific student work as evidenced in team discussions.
- The Teachers College rubric for ELA includes scaffolding and enrichment components. In addition, units in science and social studies have been blended with the Teachers College curriculum to strengthen the focus on strategies, providing multiple entry points, higher-order skills and rigorous habits. Every classroom utilizes thinking maps to increase the level of organizing thoughts for reading and writing. Curriculum units across subjects and grades identify standards and next steps. This curricular coherence promotes college and career readiness for all students by emphasizing managerial and organizational skills, as well as rigorous class discussions. Multiple entry points are embedded into all unit plans, addressing the needs of students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect a coherent set of beliefs informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Most teaching strategies provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula for all students.

Impact

Teaching practices ensure that all learners are engaged in challenging tasks that enable them to demonstrate higher-order thinking and active learning; however, there are some missed opportunities to extend opportunities for higher-achieving learners.

Supporting Evidence

- In all classrooms visited, students participated in class discussions by responding to both teacher- and student-generated questions. In many classrooms visited instructional student groupings are thoughtfully organized to build upon student strengths. For example, in a kindergarten class students were working in groups with a student mentor at each table to answer the question of “Why do elephants roll in the mud?” Students came up with possible answers and assessed each other’s answers. Table mentors were working on supporting their table members to strengthen their answers by adding text-based details. While the teacher was circulating and taking conferencing notes, one student mentor was also going table to table to check on the progress of the work.
- Lessons in most classrooms had embedded multiple entry points and there was evidence of purposeful questioning techniques in most classes. In a math class students were asked to do multi-step problems and share out explanations with each other using reason and evidence. Teachers used visuals, leveled texts and a variety of graphic organizers assuring scaffolds. In some classes, teachers asked open-ended questions to push student thinking, facilitated responses and gave students an opportunity to deepen their thinking by questioning each other during think/pair/shares and in whole class discussions. In addition, student groups were flexible, depending on the need to challenge all learners. In a grade 4 math class, groups were charting to show mathematical thinking. Table groups were using different methods such as pie charts, bar graphs, changing fractions and writing the mathematical process in relation to real life situations such as sharing brownies. Student shared explanations with each other using reason and evidence. While groupings in this class included remedial, on level and two enrichment groups, enrichment activities in some classrooms visited were limited.
- Across all subject areas projects are incorporated to increase student engagement and expose students to a wide variety of instructional tools and practices. Teachers are focused on aligning advanced instructional strategies to complement the rigor of the curriculum. However, academic tasks vary in opportunities for student choice and extensions for higher performing students, limiting accelerated learning for all students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Assessment practices, including common assessments and ongoing checks for understanding, are aligned to the school's curricula, and offer a clear portrait of student mastery.

Impact

Teachers assess student learning effectively leading to targeted interventions, varied scaffolds and shared instructional planning to meet the needs of all students. In addition, students are aware of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and faculty review student work products to inform instruction and develop supports and extensions for all learners. Teachers and school leaders articulated reasons for assessment choices that fully align to the Common Core. These choices have delivered a range of data, some daily, some monthly and some quarterly, to sustain collaborative inquiry and continuously improve instruction. Curricula maps provide evidence that the school is embedding the use of assessment and ongoing checks for understanding into their lesson planning. There is continuity across the grades with *Fountas and Pinnell* reading assessments and *My Math* pre-assessments at the start of each unit. Teachers analyze the pre-assessment data and plan differentiated work for their students based on levels of readiness and performance. The *Foundations* program is used in addition to the Teachers College curriculum in kindergarten through grade two. In addition, the school recently implemented a schoolwide grading policy and added instructional questions into every unit of study using four main areas of assessing students' overall understanding. These areas include what the students have learned and why, the formal and informal assessment criteria associated with the given task, what students do next upon completing a task, and how student can self-assess their own learning.
- Across grades and subject areas, teachers employ visuals, leveled texts and a variety of graphic organizers assuring varied experiences for students and to assist with assessment gathering. Checks for understanding, exit tickets and actionable feedback to support all students were evident across all classes visited. Teachers use checklists as well as conferencing notes, stop and jot and hands up by students for assessing on the spot. Interim data provides additional information leading to further revision of the curriculum. Class work shows a variety of feedback to students from teachers and peers specifically based on the components within the rubric. Students are aware of the assessment criteria associated with any given task, and are asked to articulate the connection their learning has to the real world and to other subject areas.
- Students at the student meeting referenced their use of rubrics and why they are important, as well as feedback from their teachers and their peers to improve on their learning. Across all classrooms visited there is consistent use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment to meet all students learning needs. In a grade 2 class students were working with an opinion writing checklist and sharing with a peer for assessment. An opinion-writing rubric was used and scored by the teacher with actionable next steps and comments on what was optimal in the narrative. Teachers provide relevant feedback and meet with students to provide immediate feedback. Peer assessment sheets and task performance rubrics are used to evaluate academic performance.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school consistently promotes a culture of high expectations for staff, students, and families.

Impact

There is a sense of mutual accountability in which all constituents contribute to a culture of learning and support so that students are supported on a clear path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated “Holding high expectations for all students, offering a rich and engaging curriculum, and establishing positive relationships with parents creates an environment to help children succeed.” This statement is communicated to the entire school community. Input from teachers and families drives initiatives, curricular decisions and the development of special programs that support student success. School leaders and staff members work in study groups, teams, and planning sessions establishing a culture of professionalism resulting in a high level of success in teaching and learning across the school. The school publishes a “Clear Expectations for Instruction and Environment” bulletin stating academic rigor goals, student work tasks, ways to show students the value of their work and efforts through the classroom environment.
- Teachers are working towards creating greater student independence through the use of self-assessments, peer-to-peer feedback, student-facilitated discussions and student-created work as evidenced by the engaging classroom environments. Classes across the school exhibit a rigorous learning process and a shared sense of ownership by both teachers and students, leading toward career and college readiness.
- The school provides clear lines of verbal and written communication to parents and families to deepen their understanding of college and career readiness expectations for their children. Coffee and conversation meetings with parents occur once a month to engage families in reciprocal dialogue regarding their child’s performance, attendance, progress and social-emotional development. School Leadership Team meetings are an open forum for discussion and the principal participates and reports current and upcoming school events and initiatives at Parent Teacher Association meetings, establishing support for student progress to the next level.
- As stated at the student meeting, students understand and appreciate their role in the school community and are well aware of the high expectations of their teachers and parents to succeed. The principal holds meetings with grade 4 and 5 students to hear student voice and discuss schoolwide issues such as trust, respect and problems. Students participate in student council and teachers support students in taking initiative in classroom leadership. The Parent Teacher Association presents student of the month awards across all grades. The entire school participates in the Positive Behavior Intervention Support program. In addition, there are Spirit Fridays and a Cougar Cash good citizen incentive awards.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations that strengthen teacher instructional capacity. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

Strong inquiry practices and shared leadership structures result in curricular and instructional coherence and positively impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are working collaboratively towards ensuring quality teaching through a deeper understanding of the Common Core and instructional shifts. Teacher teams engage in analysis of student work using an inquiry protocol to ensure alignment to the units of study. Teachers review the curricula based on trends revealed by careful analysis of student work. Teams collect and compare data, look at sample work from classes that have made gains, as well as state data and item analysis, to inform curriculum adjustments. The teams work in inquiry cycles of 3-5 weeks and revise as needed. Teacher teams across grades are working together to plan lessons aligned to the Common Core and to generate text-dependent questions to reinforce students reading and writing habits. At one team meeting, teachers discussed striving to deepen the use of teaching strategies that embed multiple entry points in the curricula for all learners and to develop multiple systems to regularly evaluate and adjust curriculum. At a grade 3 teacher team meeting, teachers looked at a student writing piece performance to analyze the alignment of practices to the opinion-writing checklist. Teachers identified areas for re-teaching and next steps that included focusing on transitions, repetitions, appropriate punctuation, and statements supporting reason.
- Many teachers serve as leaders within distributive leadership structures that include teacher-led professional development sessions, creation of curriculum units, and setting schedules for intervisitations and peer collaborations. There are common prep periods, two per grade and more on grade 5, as well as inquiry teams. Teams meet once a month with the principal across all grades. Intervisitations are supported through a Positive Learning Environment Walkthrough form and focus on collecting, discussing and implementing highly effective practices. The professional development committee created the Inquiry Team Cycle Flow Map for all grade level teams to utilize during their meetings. A majority of the teams are working independently to determine the necessary strategies to improve practice and strengthen student understanding and achievement. The impact of teamwork is evidenced in observations, student work, and performance.
- New teachers have mentors, observe best practices, and are provided with feedback to advance their practice. Teachers stated they often meet during lunch periods and outside of school hours to ensure planning for student success. Cross-grade meetings serve to make vertical alignment clear and to inform next steps. High expectations were evident meetings, with teachers focusing on the impact of practice on student work. The grade 5 team noticed that their students were having difficult time citing evidence, resulting in students creating their own booklets with using evidence as the main goal.