



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 036 Saint Albans School

Elementary School Q036

**187-01 Foch Boulevard
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Lynn Staton

**Date of review: May 23, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Terrell**

The School Context

P.S.036 Saint Albans School is an elementary school with 490 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 88% Black, 9% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.7%.

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	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	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 consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training, aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school successfully partners with families to communicate high expectations to support students' progress.

Impact

The effective communication results in a culture of mutual accountability for both all members of the school community. The successfully partnership with families supports student progress toward these goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and assistant principals maintain a schedule to ensure that all teachers receive ongoing feedback through daily walkthroughs, as well as informal and formal observations. The instructional focus is to improve questioning and student discussions. To support this goal, teachers engage in workshops during the extended day on Mondays for professional development, led by the professional development team. In addition to providing workshops aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* to support more effective questioning. Teachers engage in intervisitations to view strategies used by their peers, aligned to Blooms' Taxonomy and Webb's *Depth of Knowledge Matrix*. These practices are also included in the curriculum maps to support college and career readiness skills.
- The principal provides the faculty with a school handbook, which outlines high expectations for professionalism. In conjunction with the staff handbook, the principal provides a monthly focus calendar with reminders, such as, assignment of on-demand writing pieces and analyzing running records. The calendar also includes school wide events, such as Town Hall and Family Literacy Night. A copy of the school wide homework policy articulates by grade, the time allotment for homework. The principal communicates this information to support and maintain high levels of instructional expectations.
- Parents shared that they are provided with ongoing information via progress reports, and emails. The school messenger and the school newsletter, keeps them aware of their child's academic and social performance. A grade specific newsletter outlines events, and units of study on their grade. The school provides a monthly school calendar that advises families of workshops and events that they can attend with their children. For example, the school hosted a Family Game Night, which allowed parents and their children to play games that supported math and language skills. In addition, students are signed up for tennis and swimming lessons with their parents within the community. In May, the school hosted a Mother/Daughter and Father/Son dance on a Friday after regular school hours. Families participate with their children in the Cooktop program, which teaches both the parent and child how to grow and prepare healthy foods. Parents state that they appreciate that the administration knows each child by their first and last names and would recommend the school to families new to the community.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, student discussions are moving toward student ownership and participation.

Impact

The Danielson Framework for Teaching informs instructional practices. Across classrooms students' discussions and participation do not yet reflect student ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal states that students learn best through hands-on experiences. Teachers also echoed this belief. Across classrooms, students were observed engaged in active hands-on activities. Teachers stated that students are assigned long-term projects and the principal shared that the school is engaging in the STEAM curriculum (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) to support experiential learning. The principal articulated that there is a school wide focus to push critical thinking with essential questions. Teachers shared that they are pushing more critical thinking by incorporating essential questions into their lessons, such as, "What do you think would happen to the trees if there were no seasonal cycles?" "Why do you think we start planting in the spring?"
- In a grade 1 classroom, the students worked with a partner using play dough, toothpicks, tape and straws to build three-dimensional shapes. The teacher circulated and asked individual students questions, such as, "How many straws do you think you might need?" and "What steps did you and your partner take to make your 3D shape?" In a grade five classroom, the students were using a laptop to find information on the judicial, legislative and executive branches of government. The students collaborated on information to include on a group graphic organizer as they prepared to present their findings to the class. In a grade two class the students used foil, straws and a paper bowl to construct a lighting fixture as they studied a unit on Urban Pollution. While in most classrooms students were collaborating on their projects, some students were not engaged independently with the materials provided to support ownership of their learning through student-to-student discussions and participation.
- In a kindergarten classroom, the students were engaged in constructing paper trees and rolling tissue paper to represent leaves on the trees. Students in a grade four classroom were studying the weather and were provided instructions and various materials on how to make a wind vane, barometer, anemometer and a sling psychrometer. Each group was to present to the class the steps taken to produce their weather instrument. The students enjoyed putting the weather instruments together as they stood and referred back to the directions to make sure it was correct. The activity supported the school's belief on how students learn best, However, there were no questions posed as to why their weather tools are important in forecasting the weather or how meteorologists use these tools to help them make decisions that affect our daily lives. Thus, limiting the opportunity for students to extend their thinking and take ownership of their learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. The curriculum consistently provides rigorous tasks across grades and subjects.

Impact

The aligned curricula results in promoting college and career readiness across all grades and subjects. The curricula provide challenging tasks and higher order skills for all students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The *GO Math!* program is used to support math instruction, which is aligned to the instructional shifts. In grades 3-5, school leaders selected *Expeditionary Learning* for English Language Arts (ELA). In May 2015, teachers from each grade designed curriculum maps with units of study to reflect the Common Core Learning Standards and the school's goal to implement STEAM. Teachers in grades kindergarten through grade 2 have integrated the instructional shifts and use the *Core Knowledge* curriculum. Grade 2 and grade 3 curricula maps include academic vocabulary. The STEAM map included standards for a science unit on environmental factors that affect human rights and development. Teachers College writing curriculum is used to advance students' writing skills.
- The school follows the New York State Scope and Sequence aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards for science and social studies. Additionally, informational texts from the science and social studies curricula are used within the literacy curriculum across grades. The school made a decision to further support college and career readiness skills by assigning each grade a college to study for the year. In kindergarten, the students are studying Howard University, in grade 3 the focus is on Fisk University and in grade 5 the students are studying Spellman College. Each month students engage in a task related to college and career. For example, in October, the students discussed the path to college and researched the name for the college assigned to their grade.
- STEAM curricular maps have inserted essential questions to support higher order thinking and rigorous tasks. For example, questions focusing on the relationship of weight and ability to support objects are posed in their science class. The tasks require the students to use multiple resources to gather information. For example, the grade 3 curriculum has included the following essential questions, "How can we express our feelings and emotions in poetry?" and "How does your audience change the way you write?" thus, supporting opportunities for students to engage in higher order discussions.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices and student self-assessments consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Feedback from teachers and students' self-assessments has led to increased achievement and performance.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a variety of assessments to inform the grouping of students and adjustments to the curricula. At the beginning of the school year teachers administer the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessment to determine areas of strength and academic challenges for their students. An analysis of the data indicated that students needed additional work related to providing text-based evidence in their informational writing tasks. This led to a monthly on demand writing task to be added to the curriculum. Additionally, targeted interventions, such as, one-on-one conferences to remediate identified needs was implemented. In grades 3-5 students complete a performance task from the *Expeditionary* reading series and grades kindergarten through second grade are administered performance tasks from the *Core Knowledge* units. In addition, summative state assessment data in ELA and math for students in grades 4 and 5 is analyzed to determine specific skills to be targeted. Running records reading assessments are administered in September, December, March and June, which allows teachers to provide reading materials aligned to students' reading levels. Data from *iReady*, a computerized reading support program, is reviewed to match online tasks to support students at their instructional levels. The *GO Math!* program's chapter and unit tests are used to inform teachers on students' math needs. This year selected students in grade 2 were targeted for an enrichment program based on their mid-year *GO Math!* assessment performance.
- Teachers use a school wide grading policy to inform students and families of academic performance. The grading policy has four levels of achievement ranging from level one, below standard to level 4, above standard. Benchmark reading levels are aligned to the grade levels, with expectations for growth reflected for each month. For example, a grade 5 student reading at level "S" in September is considered to be meeting standards. In November, a grade five student whose assessments indicate that he continues to be at level "S" is considered to be approaching standards.
- Students shared they receive on-going feedback on their work. Bulletin boards and students' writing portfolios reflect feedback aligned to specific tasks. For instance, feedback on a grade four student's on demand opinion essay indicated that the student provided strong evidence from the text to support her opinion. Her next step was to check her work to make sure that sentences were complete. When asked how she will meet her next goal, the student shared that she has a checklist to help her check her work. A review of on-demand writing samples shows that students are improving in their writing based on their monthly pre- and post-writing assignments.

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 professional collaborations. Teams of teachers consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

An analysis of data promotes the achievement of school goals that results in improved teacher practice and progress for students.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate in regular team meetings. School leaders have scheduled time within teachers’ programs to support weekly team meetings. This year, teachers are focusing on building strategies to help students improve all components of their writing. In addition to grade level teams, the school has structured its vertical teams by pairing grades. For example, kindergarten and grade 1 teachers work together while teachers in grade 4 work with grade 5 teachers. During this time they discuss strategies that they use to support the school’s writing goal. The professional development team is responsible for surveying topics that teachers felt would support their practices. Questioning and planning effective student discussions were topics that all teachers suggested should be a focus.
- All teams follow protocols during their meetings. The role of team facilitator is rotated and changes on a monthly basis. The facilitator convenes the meeting, selects a member to take minutes, maintains an attendance sheet and follows up with the principal on the analysis of the data and instructional strategies that are being implemented on the grade. Teachers email each other to share the strategies used across the school. The principal shared that administrators sit in on teams periodically.
- During team meetings teachers analyze data across the grade. The grade 2 team evaluated the areas of strength and challenges that were revealed in writing samples for students in each of their classrooms. They used a common rubric to norm expectations for their students. After reviewing the writing samples, they each took turns providing feedback related to strengths, as well as the areas that needed improvement. One teacher shared that the writing samples reflected that the students needed more support in including transition words to improve the flow of ideas for the reader. A recommended strategy was to provide an exemplar in which teachers highlight transition words and conduct one on one conference to provide targeted students with specific supports. Another teacher shared that one of the writing samples lacked specific details. The team agreed to use a four square graphic organizer in which the students would organize specific information prior to starting the writing assignment. A review of pre-assessment writing and post-assessment writing samples reveals that the use of these strategies resulted in students using more transitional words and providing more specific details with overall improved writing by their students.