



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**P.S./M.S. 042 R. Vernam**

**K-8 School Q042**

**488 Beach 66 Street  
Queens  
NY 11692**

**Principal: Patricia Finn**

**Date of review: May 5, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

## The School Context

P.S./M.S. 042 R. Vernam is a K-8 school with 702 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 70% Black, 25% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 4% English Language Learners and 25% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 87.6%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills.

### Impact

Curricula are designed coherently and promote college and career readiness for all students across grades and subjects, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- The teaching staff and building leadership have adopted curricular resources approved by the New York City Department of Education for alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, the Teachers College Writing Project is integrated into all kindergarten through grade 5 instruction with plans to include it coherently in grades 6-8. Lesson planning documents include objectives tied to specific Common Core Learning Standards especially in reading, writing and math. Additionally, focus on the instructional shifts is listed on unit plans across grades. For example, English Language Arts (ELA) *ReadyGen* lesson plans in grade 3 identify close reading and text citation. The curriculum map and pacing guide for grade 5 math includes recommendations for greater emphasis on prioritizing content and assessments to align to the Common Core Learning Standards with emphasis on shifts of focus, coherence, and rigor.
- Rigorous instruction is emphasized in curricular and lesson planning documents and reflect the instructional shifts of fluency, application, deep understanding, complex text, citing evidence, and inclusion of academic vocabulary. For example, lesson plans from various grade and content areas include having students look for examples of conflict in text, solve real-life mathematical problems by applying and extending prior understanding of operations, collaborate in small groups to explain topics and ideas, understand patterns, and prepare written and verbal answers that include accurate use of academic language.
- A review of lesson plans highlights intended differentiation and scaffolds for students of varying ability, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For example, a grade 7 lesson plan in which groups of students explain how pollution impacts the earth. Students used a variety of media forms for presentation. An ELA lesson plan for a grade 6 class identifies differentiation for an ELL using an online tutorial program. A grade 1 weekly plan includes small group instruction with scaffolds for specific students. Lastly, a grade 2 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) lesson includes questions designed for three levels of learners based on performance: support (low), strategic (on grade), and enrichment (above).

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best with their work products and discussions, including opportunities to access the curriculum through multiple entry points.

### Impact

The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and instructional shifts, although planned, are not fully embedded into instruction, leading to uneven levels of student thinking, limited access to content and missed opportunities for participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- According to the leadership, the instructional focus for teachers within their classrooms revolves around teachers being more mindful of using multiple entry points with the same content but appropriate rigor adjusted for groups of students with varying skill levels. Throughout the majority of classroom visits, however, multiple entry points for students were not observed.
- School leaders and teachers identified the shift from teacher-centered instruction to student engagement with purposeful group work to promote student thinking as a fundamental instructional focus. For example, during a science lesson, a student led the review of a question in front of the class and annotated the question with input from his peers. Students identified important concepts within the question and pointed out ridiculous answers from the multiple-choice selection. The class applauded their answer when they concluded the review and correctly identified of the response. However, during a grade 5 ELA lesson, students turned and talked to explain their thoughts about what a conflict is to a partner. Although students had the opportunity to engage in discussion, it was limited by a one-minute time frame which prevented the development of a critical discussion. Additionally, in a grade 1 ELA class, students were seated around a table with books they all previously read, however when opportunities to discuss their findings and reflect on their knowledge came up, the teacher consistently presented low tiered questions, despite the students apparent understanding of the content.
- Most classes were structured for small group or station work. For example, in a kindergarten class, students began the period assigned to one of four groups to study vocabulary words. However, the individual group members were not given enough time to complete their respective tasks and several of the groups were not clear about what their specific task was. In another class where students were presenting their research to one another, the expectation was for peers to evaluate one another on various skills and provide additional comments and/or questions. However, following several of the small group presentations, some students still had not been given the evaluation sheets or did not know they were to complete them. Therefore, there were many missed opportunities for extended learning and uneven levels of student thinking.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

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

### Impact

Limited feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement and teachers make inconsistent effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a variety of tools to inform students of their performance on assignments and class tasks including rubrics, checklists, intervention logs and notebooks. For example, a narrative writing rubric for grade 7 taken from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project includes "above grade" and "below grade" rating levels for structure, development and language conventions. A review of several student work samples shows that teachers rate the work using the rubrics, although some students had difficulty explaining the sub-components attributes when asked. Other rubrics used in lower grades were developed to be more student friendly. They consisted of a simple drawing with a brief explanation of the component. Students shared that they review the rubric prior to the assignment, but they noted that rubrics were not shared consistently across all classes or content areas.
- A review of some student notebooks revealed a variety of teacher comments including a check, question mark, raw score, "great," or signature from the teacher for completion. On other work where a student wrote "I don't know," no specific feedback was identifiable. Additionally, during one lesson when students were reminded to use a rubric to provide feedback to their peers, the majority did not. The student work is often collected and maintained in a portfolio folder for each respective content area with a cover page. A review of several student portfolios, however, showed no comments or grades associated with performance tasks where they were to have been completed previously based on assignments throughout the year.
- Sticky-notes were used throughout several classes for teacher feedback, including some from peers. For example, in one ELA class, students wrote comments on sticky-notes such as, "used one detail to support your answer," "he clearly answered the question in his response," and "evidence of analysis of text where required by prompt." The feedback was provided primarily on writing assignments; most other content areas did not have similar cohesive, rubric-based peer- and self-assessment.
- Assessment data is collected for a variety of ELA skills, including *Fountas & Pinnell* levels. A tracking system is used to identify a student's progress. Most classes show a reduction in the number of students scoring a Level 1 from the September to December to March benchmarks. However, little growth is documented for students who scored a Level 3 or 4. Additionally, trackers are maintained for students and their grade level equivalency on reading, however, growth by the majority of students is not represented on the data provided.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff are developing expectations and a system for feedback that is connected to a path to college and career readiness for families. Teacher teams and staff are establishing a culture for learning that communicates high expectations with feedback and guidance supports for all students.

### Impact

Students and their families are beginning to understand with clarity the expectations needed to help prepare students for the next level of their education process.

### Supporting Evidence

- A meeting with parents and students separately revealed inconsistencies regarding thoughts on how the staff is preparing students for college and career readiness, including advancement to the next level of their education. For example, one student was proud that he has been introduced to some websites so “at home we have sites to distract our mind and keep us occupied... and not be in the streets.” A grade 3 student shared that his teacher is preparing him for the next level of his education by asking him grade 4 questions. Parents felt the guidance their child receives does not “give them a heads up” regarding the knowledge they need to prepare for high school.
- Parents are made aware of their child’s progress through a variety of communications, although not all are consistently used across grades and content areas. Some teachers report using Class Dojo, Remind app, or PupilPath to communicate with their students’ families, while others rely primarily on phone, email, and/or text. Parents who attended a question and answer meeting stated, “My child’s teachers are excellent and they inform me of everything before and after, but if [other parents] don’t come, they won’t know; they get nothing if they don’t come.” Many parents feel very comfortable communicating directly with the building leadership, including reaching out for missed assignments during an absence.
- A revision to the model of parent teacher conferences was implemented recently following an awareness that “many teachers did not have clear objectives and or an agenda for meetings,” “parents met with teachers with no time limits,” “parents were often given a great deal of information about their children specific to behavior [not academics],” and “parents did not leave the parent/teacher conferences feeling like they knew what was expected of their child and how they could help their child at home.” As such, changes to the structure and agenda of conferences was developed with specific objectives, so parents now feel they better understand how to provide help for their child at home. However, parents still feel more workshops and instruction in the Common Core Learning Standards would help them further their own understanding of student expectations and the school’s instructional goals, especially those related to writing.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams that may be loosely connected to school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students.

**Impact**

The use of an inquiry approach is developing across teams and this work does not typically result in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Inquiry practices are structured for teachers to collaborate at least once per week, to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. During an observation of an inquiry team, teachers in grade 2 created an action plan focused on the Teachers College Writing Project. The priority questions addressed were “How do we move 2.5’s to 3’s?” and “How can we improve student writing development?” These priority questions were identified based on the recognition that students are unable to organize their thoughts when developing their writing. Teachers identified a problem in their practice in that they do not explicitly model the organization of paragraphs for their students. The action plan included the use of graphic organizers, teacher modeling and anchor charts with students. The meeting facilitator offered three previously obtained editing checklists to also support students’ writing organization. The facilitator shared the checklists with her colleagues and they all raised up the one they liked the most. There was little evidence of rationale used to evaluate or determine which checklist would best meet the needs of the students and, although one teacher selected a different checklist than her colleagues, no discussion followed about why or how it may benefit students.
- A review of minutes and agendas from previously held inquiry meetings indicates that these sessions focus on objectives inclusive of analyzing data and samples of student work provided by teachers, identification of themes and trends from student work, and development of action plans. The minutes also include protocols, reviews of next steps, reviews of plus/deltas from prior meetings, and next steps for future meetings. Although inquiry meeting elements were consistent throughout several agendas reviewed, specific and actionable progress for groups of targeted students was not identifiable.
- Inquiry meetings have not yielded the strengthening of teacher practice in a coherent manner. When asked, teachers report their inquiry meetings have led to opportunities for them to step into a leadership role and although many teachers have been teaching for years, they appreciate that the inquiry meetings afford them the opportunity to go into colleagues’ classes and observe other lessons. Although these practices are beneficial to teachers, they do not reflect the use of data analysis necessary to further move student progress systemically. However, teachers do believe that their practices are informing them of data more than ever before and they have developed a clearer sense of how to look at data spreadsheets.