



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

I.S. 73 - The Frank Sansivieri Intermediate School

Middle School Q073

**70-02 54 Avenue
Queens
NY 11378**

Principal: Michael Casale

**Date of review: April 1, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo**

The School Context

I.S. 73 – The Frank Sansivieri Intermediate School is a middle school with 1,975 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 27% Asian, 1% Black, 59% Hispanic, and 13% White students. The student body includes 15% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.3%.

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	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

The vast majority of teachers engage in inquiry work systematically analyzing the impact of teacher practice and strengthening leadership roles. Teacher teams play an integral role in school decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams results in teacher leadership throughout the school and deep understanding of the instructional practices that impact student learning. This has resulted in increased student achievement and instructional coherence across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers play a role in key decisions have ownership and a voice in curricular matters that affect student learning. A review of the English Language Arts (ELA) unit on myths and heroes indicated that teachers revised the initial writing assessment and scaffolded questions for Entering and Emerging students (ENL) and gifted populations. Teacher team analysis of student work led to the development of a tiered system of questioning that targets the needs of ENLs and higher achieving students. Preliminary results show an increase in student performance in writing.
- All teachers meet in Professional Learning Cycles (PLC) to identify the team's problem of practice. They then research viable strategies to implement into their practice and they meet weekly to analyze student work and data and discuss the trends and progress noticed. Team analysis of the PLC from October to January indicated a description of the problem of practice, what resources were utilized to support student achievement, strategy implemented, data trends, and next steps. An example of a problem of practice, completed by one PLC team was "How can we use discussion questions to help guide elaboration?" The team came up with a research-based strategy called the Discussion Wheel, and implemented it in all their classrooms. They monitored its effectiveness and shared out to the staff their findings. Their findings indicate that the majority of students use this strategy and teachers noticed an increase in their grades in the elaboration section of the rubric in writing pieces.
- Administration and teacher leaders are able to identify distributed leadership structures that are deeply rooted in the school's day to day operations. For example, teacher leaders within departments have been identified to share their expertise with their colleagues within their content. Using the school's model of distributed leadership, teachers demonstrating expertise in identified areas support the instructional foci by providing professional development during the Monday 80-minute block as evidenced by a review of the professional development calendar.

Area of Focus

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 with the school's curriculum, thus providing actionable feedback to students. Assessment practices, including ongoing checks and student self-assessment are present across classrooms.

Impact

In some cases, feedback from rubrics and assessments varies in quality and does not always demonstrate a clear portrait of student mastery. There are some missed opportunities to ensure that students are aware of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula-aligned assessments practices are implemented to monitor students' progress and provide feedback. Informal assessments across subjects include conference notes, checklists, unit pre- and post-assessments, and exit slips that provide authentic information on student performance and progress. In some student work assessment and feedback revealed a clear portrait of student progress and as a result students were able to articulate their next steps.
- Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student-self assessment is used so that teachers make effective adjustments to meet student needs. However, not all students can articulate their next learning steps as evidenced during the student meeting. For example, a student shared a grade 6 end-unit task that required the student to compare the sale prices for two stores, justify their reasoning using mathematical terminology, show all work and write answers in complete sentences. The feedback provided to the student stated, "Complete sentences needed." Similarly, in a science class the teacher did not accurately assess that most students understood the task and dedicated a great deal of lesson time to explanation and introduction before sending the students to work independently, thereby missing the opportunity to make immediate adjustments to lesson to meet all student needs.
- Students in a grade 6 English class were observed working in partnership to self- and peer assess against the assessment rubric and monitor their own understanding and progress. Students were aware of their next learning steps, as evident by the teacher conferring with some and making immediate adjustments. However, although teachers were seen conferring with students in most classes, it was not always evident that adjustments were immediately made.
- Classroom visits and meeting with teachers indicated that the school uses ongoing assessments and teachers use this data to group students and adjust lesson plans. Students say that teachers confer with them and give them strategies on how to improve their work and they are able to plan for next steps. However, feedback observed in student work does not yet consistently offer a clear portrait of student mastery. For example, teacher feedback on an initial writing assessment task stated, "Wow, great job! Remember to use transitions."

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the schoolwide curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using data for all students.

Impact

Curricula and tasks reflect a schoolwide coherence and provide access for all students to be cognitively engaged to promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's curricula were selected based upon their alignment to the Common Core and content standards. Through targeted professional development, literacy skills and strategies are integrated into the four major content areas in the curriculum with continued emphasis on the instructional shifts. In math, the school has chosen to focus on standards that require students to use fractions and decimals to solve real-world and math problems in grade 6. The school uses New York City scope and sequence in science and social studies and supplemental resources such as *EngageNY*, *Expeditionary Learning*, *CMP3*, and *Carnegie Math*. The school's continued instructional foci on developing and implementing systems to monitor and adjust instruction using ongoing assessment data to ensure student progress, promotes college and career readiness for all students.
- Incorporated instructional shifts in grade 7 ELA and science units focus on the argumentative essay. For example, a sexual vs asexual reproduction unit focused on an argumentative essay that compares the advantages of systems of reproduction, resulting in coherence and providing the conceptual support for students to expand their thinking and become college and career ready.
- Teachers engage in professional learning cycles to discuss a problem of practice, such as "How can we use discussion questions to help guide elaboration?" In one meeting the group's objective was for students to carry on academic conversations and relay the information from the discussion into written word. The group came up with a strategy called the Discussion Wheel which was implemented in all classrooms. Teachers monitored its effectiveness and shared their findings with the staff. For example, in a grade 6 science class the task for the students was to create a weather forecast where they discuss how a particular animal responds to changes in the weather and climate. Students researched animal changes in migration patterns, based on the changing weather. Their findings were that most students enjoyed using the Discussion Wheel strategy and there was an increase in their grades in the elaboration section of the rubric in writing pieces.
- The ELA department decided to revise their curriculum as a result of a recent increase in enrollment of English Language Learners (ELLs). For example, a review of grade 6 unit 3 on myths and heroes revealed focused differentiation, academic language, supports and strategies, which is resulting in improved writing for this subgroup.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, instructional practices reflect the school’s philosophy on how students learn best and consistently offer all students access to the curricula and exposure to higher-order thinking.

Impact

Schoolwide practices are evident across grades and subjects. Multiple entry points, questioning scaffolds and routines consistently require students to demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students sat in groups and utilized the workshop model. Students turn and talk to peers and answered questions to support learning. For example, students in a grade 6 math class, answered the questions, “What common mistakes might students make?” and “How can we avoid these mistakes?” Students engage in collaborative reflection in their groups.
- In a grade 7 science class, students compared a cell to a city or something else in their everyday lives. Students worked together on a chart relating the cell’s function to something from their everyday lives, and then formulated their own cell analogy and decided on how the cellular organelles relate to something they knew. Students used evidence from the text and academic vocabulary to substantiate which cellular organelle is most important to the cell. Students were provided with multiple questions, tasks were differentiated, and students were given a choice on how to represent and demonstrate learning. Similarly, students in a grade 6 math class discovered the area of an irregular figure by engaging in an experiential hands-on activity by decomposing it into familiar shapes. Turn and talks allowed students to discuss how they could find the area of the whole shape and then apply formulas for the area to determine the area in real-world mathematical problems.
- In a grade 6 English class, the students were provided with a challenging learning task that encouraged collaboration. Students asked insightful questions about how their partners could improve on their writing goals and meet the rubric expectations. After writing the first draft of their essays comparing a common theme found in a myth and *King Arthur*, students were ready to peer edit and focus on asking specific questions to help their peers increase their elaboration. Students worked in pairs to revise and improve their writing. Students followed discussion questions on a peer editing sheet to fulfill essay rubric requirements.
- Across ELA classrooms, teachers provide quality supports and extensions into the curricula. For example, questions were differentiated and scaffolded for ENL students, helping students move towards greater understanding by examining the thoughts and then the actions of the main character. Similarly, general education students and higher achievers were also provided with targeted questions including, “Does the author more effectively use thoughts or actions to develop Percy’s character?” and “To what extent is Percy an archetypical hero?” respectively.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire school community including teachers, students and parents through timely ongoing communication. Delivery of ongoing feedback helps families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Impact

Structures that support consistent expectations assure mutual accountability among staff and that families understand expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have clearly defined standards for professional development. Professional development plans were jointly developed with staff input based on classroom observation practices and elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers engage in ongoing professional development led by colleagues and outside expert providers. Teachers further develop their skill sets through professional learning cycles and debriefing sessions. A review of the school’s professional development calendar indicates that the teachers are currently engaging in professional learning cycles that focus on identified problems of practice which emulate a culture where accountability is reciprocal between all constituents.
- In the parent meeting, every parent was able to speak about ongoing feedback to families in the form of Engrade and eChalk, online programs that allows teachers to post grades and homework resources for students and parents. These two programs provide families the opportunity to log on and see how their child is performing on exams, homework, and any other academic tasks. Furthermore, parents indicated that the school, in partnership with the parent coordinator, offers parents multiple opportunities to participate in workshops that are geared towards Common Core expectations and assessments, as well as the high school articulation process and college and career readiness. One very popular workshop is held in collaboration with the Child Abuse Prevention Program on “Guiding Good Choices.” This workshop helps parents deal with the turbulent middle school years.
- Parents also spoke about the many opportunities the school provides them to help them understand expectations connected to college and career readiness. At the start of each year they receive a very comprehensive parent and student handbook that helps them support their children in their compliance with the school’s principles. This year parents were invited to attend the Saturday Academy where they were afforded the opportunity to take a math class in which a math teacher provides insight into what students are currently learning in a math class. Similarly, English as a new language and technology classes are offered. Parents stated that these opportunities allow them to help their children at home.
- All students have advisory and use *The Leader in Me* as a guide. Students focus on the topics such as leadership, student voice, making better choices, and preparing for the next academic level. As a result, students have shown growth in preparedness and are more comfortable and confident speaking.