



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 084 Steinway

Elementary - Middle School Q084

**22 - 45 41 Street
Queens
NY 11105**

Principal: John Buffa

**Date of review: February 26, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

P.S. 084 Steinway is an elementary - middle school with 346 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5 and grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 7% Black, 39% Hispanic, and 43% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 14% 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 93.9%.

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	Celebration	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	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	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of articulated beliefs about how students learn best, including strategies which consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula so all learners are engaged appropriately in their work products.

Impact

The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and instructional shifts support all students' experiences in the classroom with engaging and challenging tasks that demonstrate higher-order thinking skills and high levels of student discussion and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- A school belief communicated verbally by both school leadership and staff is students learn best through a “productive struggle.” They further shared “high levels of thinking with meaningful work products,” “student ownership,” and “group work” guide their instruction. An observation of several classes showcased students engaged in small group activities that required discussion, used a variety of multi-step resources, and choice. During a social studies class, groups of students collected text-based evidence from a variety of sources to explore an ancient Chinese dynasty and complete varied tasks, including illustration, writing, and compare and contrast. Students in a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) class were given a bin of materials and directed to collaborate on the design and construction of a water wheel through discussion and trial and error. Some groups were provided images of water wheels, some were provided notes, while others had more direct support from the teacher. Students are regularly challenged to apply their rich vocabulary to their thinking with writing or group discussions.
- Students in a math class were directed to use the terms denominator and numerator during a review of fraction problems. The teacher asked several students to define denominator and suggested some working with a paraprofessional highlight what it means in their notes. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math class, a student noticed the numbers being written on the board created an “order.” The teacher told the students that they are to recognize that “order” as a “pattern,” and had them all say “pattern.”
- Students engaged in group discussions through most classes observed. A group of grade 5 students participated in a Socratic seminar in small groups around their classroom. Each group maintained their own discussion and participated in agreement and disagreement with their peers using text-based evidence. One girl who disagreed with her group member stated, “Maybe the character is lying as she has done in the past?” A grade 2 class discussed their own personal experiences of having lost teeth when learning about health and hygiene.

Area of Focus

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 that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

Inquiry practices strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and result in improved progress towards goals for groups of students, although increased student achievement and mastery of goals for all learners is not evidenced.

Supporting Evidence

- According to school leaders, teachers meet regularly to look at student work and identify next steps that would “lead to greater student outcomes.” An observation of a grade 5 team meeting using data driven instruction provided some insight into how they “work as a cohesive group and collaborate... to help kids.” During the observed inquiry meeting, teachers discussed why there is a deficit in students’ ability to solve real world problems involving multiplying fractions and mixed numbers. Through discussion, actions were identified which included implementing flexible grouping with teacher support, offering modified curricula, and including manipulatives. However, these efforts do not yield the systematic identification of next steps or the transfer of findings into classroom practices across all grades and content areas that would result in increased student achievement for all learners.
- A review of several Professional Learning Community action plans presented by the lead inquiry team revealed that they consistently include topic information, action plans, target measures, timescales, responsibilities, and actual results achieved (as of current date). Much of the action plans’ components are written in generalized practices such as, “providing structure for student work suggests the lead inquiry team will create protocols for discussion centered on student work,” and “the responsibility is of the whole team while results are on-going.” Another action plan regarding the quality of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) states, “the area for development will include a structure of peer review for IEPs.” Evidence of implementation is written where peer reviewers will fill-out and submit IEP checklists to the School Implementation Team (SIT) team after all IEPs are finalized. The action plans and targets are written in a vague manner that limits school-wide instructional coherency and mastery of goals for groups of students.
- Teachers throughout the building shared the inquiry team’s impact on student achievement is significant because they are able to “embed practices in their instruction that the [students] are not getting, especially in math.” Specifically, teachers provided some documents highlighting their use of data to target some subgroups such as low performers on the Unit 1 *ReadyGEN* assessment. Future teaching points identified include the use of context clues within a sentence and within a paragraph, and to distinguish non-literal from literal language.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data for a diversity of learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

Instructional planning decisions are made purposefully to build college and career readiness for all students, so they are cognitively engaged with the curricula and tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- According to teachers, the instructional focus is to plan engaging lessons which incorporate hands-on learning through the use of manipulatives and move from whole group instruction to small group work, and finish instruction with independent work/assessment. Several teachers expressed they have surveyed their students and “try to address [their learning] because every student is different, but most are visual learners.” For example, a unit plan on learning how to take care of teeth requires students to listen to a read-aloud, then think-pair-share in groups, followed by writing a paragraph using a graphic organizer. Alternately, a grade 8 document has students first independently define the term natural selection, then engage in small group investigations, before finally participating in a whole group question and answer exit ticket discussion using plickers (digital checks for understanding tools).
- Teachers said they “use data to inform” their instructional planning. A review of a lesson plan books, identifies students grouped according to their math skill. Students are assigned to one of four groups, which include tasks where they use laptops, solve word problems, or complete calculations. Another planning document states, “student groups for this activity were determined by students’ common answers to the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) assessment probe.” Throughout most planning documents, students are listed in purposeful groups based on previously administered assessment results and analysis.
- Differentiated homework is provided to students in some classes based on formative assessment results. A math homework assignment for students learning how to multiply fractions and whole numbers is differentiated so that high comprehension students can find the product of a series of equations while low comprehension students are expected to write the multiplication expression that each model represents. Additionally, teachers incorporate multidisciplinary content into their homework and assignments. Building leadership shared, math content is infused into science projects and art lessons include a focus on supporting English Language Arts standards so instruction is “seamless and they are talking about it in both classes to make it cohesive.”
- The majority of curriculum resources and lesson documents identify the Common Core Learning Standard being addressed during instruction and/or the skill or vocabulary focused on with the supplemental student assignment.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subjects. Additionally, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction effectively to meet the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in all grades were able to explain when asked how they use rubrics and some articulated they understand what they “need to improve to score a four.” Additionally, some of them shared they use checklists to determine their progress towards completion of the assignment. For example, one art checklist required students to check a face smiling, no affect, or frowning for focus, composition, creativity, and craftsmanship. Each heading of the checklist included a statement for the student to reference beginning with “I,” such as, “My art is unique and I used my own ideas.” Additionally, students wrote a brief response to why their artwork is special and one thing they learned during the project. In another class, students were asked to demonstrate their understanding of the task using a self-assessment rubric with green, yellow, orange, or red boxes. Green indicated the student can clearly explain her thinking and teach a friend, while red implied a student does not understand the task well enough to start on her own.
- A review of student work samples showed students highlighting key aspects of rubric language at a level four prior to attempting the task so they fully understood the criteria necessary for success. Although students were provided information to understand what is necessary to achieve a level four, many students still received scores reflective of a level two or three. On most rubric forms returned to the student, additional anecdotal comments were included from the teacher writing detailing areas for commendation and recommendation, often phrased as a question.
- Assessment data is used to track student progress and adjust instruction for groups of students and individuals. An English as a Second Language teacher tracks specific students in a one-to-one environment through various modalities and provides written feedback to the principal and his colleagues. The information is also shared with parents who are made aware of how it supports their child's growth and, according to one letter written by a parent, “recognize and appreciate the benefits of this program... [and how it] has made such a difference for our son”. Additional parents shared the progress reports they receive inform them of their child's strengths and weaknesses so they can help to “make them better.” Teachers stated the use of assessment data informs their instruction “of what students can do and what they have mastered,” “so I try to differentiate as much as possible.”

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders, teacher teams, and staff communicate expectations consistently that are connected to a path of college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback.

Impact

Staff, families, and students understand progress necessary toward high expectations and a culture of communication supports and prepares the students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide resources for all staff to continuously focus on improving their inclusion of tiered questioning during instruction. Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* question prompts are provided to teachers at all four levels. Many staff members post these in their classroom and school leaders shared they felt teachers have brought in a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations through being in this together and focused on yielding positive student outcomes. The mission statement for the school includes creating an environment that enables all its students to “reach their highest potential” and “meet the challenges of the 21st century.”
- Students are provided opportunities to engage in Junior Achievement, a program dedicated to giving young people knowledge and skills they need to plan their future and be successful academically and economically. Through the program, students in kindergarten are exposed to the basics of personal economics and consumer choices. Other skills taught to students include: learning entrepreneurial ship in grade 1, community and citizen contributions in grade 2, financial literacy in grade 3, and participation in a job shadow program with field trips in grade 8.
- Students shared they were aware of how the school is helping prepare them for the next level in their education. One student in grade 5 stated, “Our teachers are new here and they saw we need a lot of writing improvement, so [they] taught us how to improve our writing with quotes and what we are going to need for college, so [they] are preparing us in a way that so we are still 5th graders, but ahead.” A grade 8 student furthered, “we do the math we are supposed to, I have seen myself get more and more ready” for high school. A girl in grade 2 shared her “teacher teaches us older material and has posters and [has us] write college and high school words.”