



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**P.S. 123**

**Elementary School Q123**

**145-01 119 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11436**

**Principal: Anthony Hooks**

**Date of review: March 10, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

## The School Context

P.S. 123 is an elementary school with 697 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 12% Asian, 61% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 4% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.2%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery while tracking progress. Additionally, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback is provided to teachers and students regarding student achievement, so that adjustment to curriculum and instruction ensures all students can demonstrate increased mastery and students are made aware of their next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- The teachers administer English Language Arts and math benchmark assessments at the Beginning of the Year, Middle of the Year, and End of the Year to identify student needs, which are used to drive instructional decisions. The assessment analysis revealed several skill areas for focus, including; phonics, reading comprehension, and penmanship. Adjustments to the curriculum have taken place through professional development discussions. For example, teachers realized students were struggling with multi-step problem solving, so teachers developed strategies around questioning techniques, especially complex questions that require two to three steps to address this. Weekly assessments are administered to all students who receive feedback on their growth and level of performance.
- The instructional focus across grades and content areas is on Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* 3b and 3d. Feedback from teacher meetings led to the creation of student reflection forms and how students could show evidence of their own growth. Additionally, students are fully aware of their reading levels as evidenced on their portfolios and through personal statements. During many of their group work tasks in mathematics, reading and writing, responsibilities include students checking and grading their own work as well as their peers. A review of student self-reflection forms indicate that students identify something they do well, something they are still working on, and how long they believe it will take to perform well in that particular skill or concept.
- Students are fully aware of their progress and their performance. Several students shared samples of the feedback they received from their teacher. Where they had done well was indicated and actionable next steps were provided for those areas that they needed to improve. A boy explained how he scored well on the rubric but "could add another page and more advanced words." Peers provide feedback in areas of appreciation, wonderings, and improvement using student-led writing conference sheets. Other peer assessment forms request students provide yes and no responses to a series of questions and written anecdotal information along with a predicted teacher score.
- Teachers maintain conference notes on each student in areas of math, reading, writing, and content for each key standard as it is taught with a check, check-minus, check-plus, and brief written notes. In addition, teachers track student growth towards mastery using checklists that address the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students. Distributed leadership structures are in place allowing teachers to have a voice in school decisions.

### Impact

Inquiry practices typically result in improved teacher practice, although not necessarily towards progress at a level of mastery for groups of students. Additionally, teacher decisions although expressed, do not necessarily play an integral role in student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- During common planning time, teachers throughout the grade review student work and discuss their students' progress and performance. Steps are then identified to support vertical introduction in the lower grades. A team of teachers focused on developing strategies to improve the writing of a student who has shown growth in his reading. Teachers reviewed the student's work and discussed his strength and weaknesses. Next steps were developed and included the use and clarification of a checklist, choice selection for a graphic organizer, and a model example for the student using the Interactive White Board. Although protocol practices are established for teacher teams when engaging in inquiry work, it is not evident how the process will result in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners.
- Curricular adjustments are made as a result of inquiry meetings and are reflected in recent New York State benchmark questions that were administered to students. More focus on multiplication with two-three step problems was established and initially assigned units were removed. Teachers also felt students were improving in their writing based on their verbal requests to do it again because "they love it". Teachers shared that student work indicates that the writing of an introduction has improved. Specific hard data regarding student achievement was not provided, limiting the ability to demonstrate specific growth for students' written skills.
- Teachers felt they were able to have a voice in key decisions throughout the building by offering suggestions in the anonymous suggestion box centrally located in the main office. Additionally, teachers are involved in committees and complete surveys throughout the year. Although their appears that there are several options for the collection of information related to school decisions, it is not clear how the information offers staff the chance to make integral decisions that affect student learning across the school.
- Teacher teams shared that through their analysis they develop next steps by understanding what is working and what is not and then develop an action plan. Teachers feel their teacher practice has been positively impacted through their inquiry work by offering opportunities for ideas and strategies to be implemented in one another's classroom. For example, one teacher shared their difficulty with having a targeted group of students respond to peer questioning. A suggestion to provide a posted list of prompts on each student's desk was implemented. Another teacher shared that implementing an inquiry strategy where student's popcorn their conversations encouraged more participation.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Curricula are aligned to the common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work.

### Impact

Coherency with curricula across grades and subjects promotes college and career readiness for all students such that all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities have access to the curricula and tasks while being cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership and staff have adopted the *Ready Gen* and *GoMath* programs for implementation in English Language Arts and math respectively. To incorporate curricula that provide a consistent standards-based, cognitively engaging, rich discussion technique driven instructional program teachers have completed modifications to the curricula. Teachers meet collaboratively to review curriculum documents, maps, strategy of the month, skill of the month, and support the instructional block initiative.
- All vertically aligned curriculum maps in English Language Arts identify each Common Core Learning Standard, the date it is taught as well as what was retaught based on reflection of student work samples. Additionally, each six-week cycle lists content that mirrors instruction with other disciplines, including social studies and science. Essential questions, specific skills, and strategies are provided to accompany each anchor and supporting text. For example, one module entitled “Becoming an Active Citizen”, lists *Brave Girl* as the anchor text to address how characters’ actions contribute to the events, plot, and theme in a text. Skills include real life connections between words, their use, the main idea and the key details.
- Revisions to the *GoMath* program are developed by teachers to help the lower-leveled students become engaged. A modified graphic organizer for solving problems asks students to complete a series of boxes regarding what they know, need to know, operations used, strategies to solve, and the answer. A revised worksheet in mathematics informs students to complete their work in a set of areas labeled step 1-3. Once they have completed their answer they are required to write an explanation of the steps they took to solve the equation. Yet another scaffold included students drawing a picture of the equation prior to providing a written description of how they know their solution is correct.
- In all lesson plans reviewed, the learning objective is in in terms of what students will do based on Common Core Learning Standards and skills. Additionally, as an instructional focus, most lessons provide active engagement through both small group instruction and independent work prior to whole group conferring or reflection.

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

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Teachers provide students with high level learning tasks.

### **Impact**

Student work products consistently reflect higher order thinking skills and participation including the work products of English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The staff believes in engaging students in challenging tasks through reasoning. Across classes, students had opportunities to demonstrate their thinking with both the teacher and in small groups. During a grade 2 math class, students were asked, “How did you know the answer is \$1.58?” One shared, “I knew it was \$1.58, I started with the quarters, and five dimes since dimes are worth ten cents, so then you are adding one dollar with fifty cents and then adding the three pennies.” Another student agreed but offered an alternative solution and was asked to go up to the board and model his approach for the class. During an English Language Arts lesson in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students played a game using their skills and knowledge to answer common themed character questions based on independent choice books.
- The use of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge questioning techniques is an instructional focus school wide. In most classes, students asked their peers questions in addition to the questions presented by the teacher. In a grade 1 literacy class the teacher asked some students “Who is the narrator that writes that book?” while another girl shared a self-selected question dealing with the emotions of the character. In a grade 5 social studies lesson, the teacher reminded one group “to always challenge your peers with questions” while with another group she verified they have a focus question to discuss.
- Throughout most classes students appeared engaged in their instruction and felt rewarded by their classroom experiences. As one student conveyed, “one of the most important things in my life is education and without an education I wouldn’t be able to live and get an education and get a job.” Other students said they felt engaged in their classes and learning because they get to do group work and talk with their peers about their learning, and learning from their peers they felt sometimes was more real than from the teacher. Yet, in a grade 5 class where the students were conducting research, one student said she wanted to work by herself because she wanted to present the findings orally and complete the study guide.

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students and provide clear, focused and effective feedback.

### Impact

A culture of mutual accountability exists between staff and school leaders towards high expectations where students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers noticed grade 5 students were struggling with extended responses, and the teachers themselves felt their extended response instruction could improve. As such, the building leadership, in conjunction with teachers, identified research based articles and best practices for teachers to read and learn from. Teachers shared that since they read the articles, and implemented the strategies they have “started to see a change in their students’ understanding and ability to complete extended response questions.
- The school leaders have developed rigorous goals to improve student performance on standardized tests. These goals are communicated to staff along with clear articulation of the mission and vision statement. One goal states “By June 2016, 90% of students in grades K-5 will improve in reading comprehension and fluency as evidenced by students moving up two or more levels on running records as compared to fall 2015.” These expectations have been communicated to staff and reinforced through the implementation of rigorous reading aligned Common Core Learning Standards curriculum maps, teacher feedback on Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluation forms, and training. The professional development calendar highlights the instructional focus and provides comprehensive strategies for grades kindergarten through five. The principal includes training sessions focusing on topics such as answering constructed response questions and writing practice. Specific tips are provided to help facilitate implementation within the classroom.
- Students felt the school does a wonderful job of preparing them for college and career by making them aware of the choices they will have as they get older. Several students had the opportunity to visit a local middle school and understand how it is different than their current school. All students learned about the importance of college during college day as they were exposed to information boards about colleges and their teachers all shared personal stories of their experiences. Additionally, students said their teachers get them ready for the next level of their education by giving them practice constructed responses in their respective content area and challenging vocabulary words they will experience on the SAT. Students were able to share some of the vocabulary words they have been taught recently and were proud of their ability to use them in their discussions.