



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 127 Aerospace Science Magnet

Elementary - Middle School Q127

**98-01 25th Avenue
Queens
NY 11369**

Principal: Evita Sanabria

**Date of review: January 21, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

P.S. 127 Aerospace Science Magnet is an elementary – middle school with 1,338 students from grade kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 13% Black, 73% Hispanic, 2% White, and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 31% English Language Learners and 14% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.5%.

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 Framework for Teaching, 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	Celebration	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:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

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

Impact

The assessments used aligned with the curriculum allowing for actionable feedback to be provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers use results from these assessments to make effective adjustments to meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Baseline assessments are analyzed and teacher teams quantify the number of students that are performing at various achievement levels and identify trends that exist across the grade within various subgroups of students including students with disabilities and English Language Learners. Next steps for instruction are then determined to address students' needs. Trends in reading skills recorded by grade 4 teachers during professional development meetings revealed students' low stamina for completing long passages, uneven phonemic awareness and weakness in their retention of information. Actionable next steps included use of multi-sensory strategies, visual charts, and breaking down directions into smaller increments. Grade 5 trends included low fluency levels, errors in pronouncing the ending of words correctly, and poor retelling of text in sequential order. The teachers employed strategies such as stopping at punctuation, post-its for comprehension, and the use of sequence and transition words.
- Rubrics are used throughout content areas and various grades including those developed by teachers, state curriculum providers, and purchased curriculum products. The administration shared that the use of rubrics allows teachers to identify what skills students are learning and what specific strategies they utilize in completing a task. Students stated that they use rubrics in all classes and sometimes self-assess and peer-assess themselves as well. A review of student work indicated that teachers' feedback was given with specific next steps. Detailed feedback statements such as, "Next time please follow the format, specifically proper paragraph structure" or "Your next steps for future essays should be to include more facts throughout your essays and please watch your grammar" was consistently evident in student work products across the grades.
- Teachers across grades practice ongoing progress monitoring using the instructional text level of the students. Teachers post reading levels in classrooms and inform both students and their family of their reading levels. Parents shared they are very pleased with their child's "improvement in reading" and "appreciate the thirty minutes of required daily reading that is expected of each student." Progress monitoring logs maintained by teachers indicate student reading accuracy, competency, and fluency, in addition to the benchmark placement level. Teachers track this information and provide students with daily reading logs to self-monitor the amount of time reading. Students are also provided opportunities to read above their benchmark level. Additionally, conference notes on each student are maintained to identify strengths and provide next steps for each child.

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 the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have leadership capacity and a voice in key decisions.

Impact

Teacher leadership and inquiry practices have strengthened teacher instructional capacity although not coherently for all students' achievement towards a level of mastery. Although structures are in place for teacher voice, they are not as yet embedded systemically where they play a primary role in strategic decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- The inquiry team for grade 6 focused on how English Language Arts and math strategies align with the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers shared their implementation of the instructional shifts as they primarily relate to multiplication and division noting that at this level you cannot really teach the math without teaching the English Language Arts. Teachers agreed the instruction of word problems requires students to state the claim and support for their answer. Throughout the discussion several teachers provided additional instructional strategies and one teacher shared that she uses an index card ring with her English Language Learners and suggested it could be useful for all students. Several teachers commented “that is a pretty good idea” and “I have actually never done that.” Although one teacher appeared to be typing notes and reviewing some of the strategies, it was not specifically clear how the adoption of these strategies and best practices will become embedded in teacher pedagogy across the grade.
- Teachers feel their common planning time serves to provide opportunities for them to engage in shared ideas and strategies, while being supportive. Specifically, teachers communicated they believe that sharing is caring and the practices shared are good strategies which promote better teaching. They felt that simply learning from each other makes them improve. When teachers further elaborated on how the inquiry discussions have impacted student achievement, one teacher shared that results would not be known for another two months. Others communicated they are trying to target more skills that will help the students be prepared and more comfortable on the state tests.
- The administration provides the calendar of professional learning topics. Several staff members are identified as facilitators for the learning sessions based on their demonstrated knowledge and classroom practice. Such topics, as the analysis of the science scope and sequence, Socratic seminar protocol, and essentials of designing coherent instruction are offered. The administration facilitates sessions as well promoting a shared understanding of learning and collaboration.
- Several teachers shared they have recently started a teacher leader program themselves, in hopes of having a transformation towards being seen as leaders in the building. The impact of the program on building distributed leadership has not been assessed as yet.

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, content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

These purposeful decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects result for all students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of several of the unit planning documents across the grades point to a focus on expeditionary learning through modules subdivided into units of instruction. Guided questions are associated with each unit and further specified in each core content area including math, social studies, and science. Units to be taught at the end of the year include preparation for students as they advance to the next level. A grade three unit for May is titled “Getting ready for the fourth grade.” Similar end of year units are planned across the grades.
- Essential questions included in unit plans reflect critical thinking opportunities for students. For example, a question in mathematics for grade three asked, “How can you add and subtract whole numbers and decide if an answer is reasonable?” The science question in a grade four unit asked, “How do the properties of water affect living things and the natural environment?” and a grade five centered on “What is the role of sports in American culture?” Similar, high level questions were framed for all the other grades.
- Many lesson plan documents reveal opportunities for all learners to engage in rigorous instruction. Scaffolds and multiple entry points are consistently included in lesson plans assuring all students access to rigorous learning experiences. A grade seven social studies plan has difficult words defined in parenthesis for easier comprehension for students who struggle. A grade three math lesson students will complete individualized online assessments to pre-assess their knowledge so personalized instruction can be determined and assigned based on their needs.
- Many English Language Learners participate in the schools’ dual language program where communication in either Spanish or English is limited to one day’s instruction on a rotating basis. The teacher’s lesson plan is created in the language associated with the instructional language of the day and all students are expected to perform their learning tasks accordingly. Vocabulary is a key focus and defined for all students in each lesson. Additionally, learning activities require the students to incorporate the associated vocabulary words in their tasks.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Strategies, including questioning scaffolds, consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all students.

Impact

Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts inform best practices so that all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- A focus on text-based evidence was consistently observed throughout classrooms in all grade areas. Students support their answers either referencing the text or directly quoting from it. Students were provided scaffolds to assist with their learning task as needed. In a grade five class, students shared their findings about a happy-faced spider referencing an article they had read and used relevant vocabulary words that were included in the reading, such as endangered and extinct. In a dual language lesson students were provided the text in Spanish. Several students shared their findings in front of the class referencing the main text of the article about insects thus promoting increased speaking experiences.
- Teachers consistently facilitated the class discussions while students. During an English Language Arts lesson students suggested details to be included on their “what I know”, “what I want to know”, and “what I learned” chart (KWL) while the teacher recorded the information. In a grade seven social studies class, students were working in small groups discussing three questions centered on providing evidence as to who was the instigator of the Boston Massacre. Students responded based on their peer’s prior response and then included additional information. Students were able to develop and support their opinion using a picture and the previously provided text information. Several students also changed their opinion based on either the inclusion of the picture or their classmate’s argument.
- In an English Language Arts class students participated in a Socratic seminar discussing farmer immigration laws and their relationship to the book *Esperanza Rising*. This learning experience gave students the opportunity to make connections between non-fiction and fictional text. The teacher clarified the seminar expectations and provided post-it notes for several students who required them for assistance in their discussion. Students often agreed and provided additional evidence based on each other’s responses. One boy responded, “I think this text relates because the article says they were sent back to their country because if she [Esperanza] didn’t hide she would have been sent back too.” A student then asked why that would happen and he replied “because they were immigrants.”
- In one special education math class, students were provided with individualized attention based on their specific learning needs through the use of multiple stations to provide students with varied ways to participate. Several students worked at computers on their leveled math questions, two boys worked with a teacher on basic subtraction using dry erase boards, two other boys worked on completing an assessment, while several others were using counting blocks with a paraprofessional in the room and cheered when they got the correct answer.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students and offer ongoing feedback and guidance/advisement.

Impact

A system of accountability supports high expectations for teachers and students where supports prepare students for the next level in their education and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration informs staff of all initiatives and provides them an overview of the expectations. The instructional focus for the year is centered on the guided reading initiative. Teachers were provided an overview of what it entailed including the use of baseline assessment data to support the awareness of students across grades with low reading stamina. This initiative was presented to the staff by the assistant principal during grade common planning meetings. The staff were given clear steps to follow including their revisiting the classroom library systems and structures, creating uniform reading logs, identifying trends in student reading habits and having informal conferences with students.
- Students stated they felt the school prepares them for high school by informing them of their options and informing them of open house opportunities. Grade seven students shared their teachers are trying to make an environment for us to get prepared for high school expectations. They further added, our “tests mirror high school tests and books we read are complex and make us dig deep into the text.” One student also shared “because we are doing multiplication, it gets me ready for fourth grade and I get fast” at it.
- One of the school’s goals is to increase the number of students performing at the proficiency level on the state assessments 1% higher than the prior year’s results. This would assure that the school met the Annual yearly Progress target they had met previously. The creation of a strategic, measureable, attainable, realistic, and timely goal takes into account the rigorous demands of Common Core Learning Standards aligned assessments and instruction.