



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 129 Patricia Larkin

Elementary School Q129

**128-02 7 Avenue
Queens
NY 11356**

Principal: Marilyn Alesi

**Date of review: March 31, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

P.S. 129 Patricia Larkin is an elementary school with 1,134 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 31% Asian, 2% Black, 51% Hispanic, and 15% White students. The student body includes 14% English Language Learners and 14% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.4%.

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	Focus	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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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 are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Across the school, grade teams meet on a consistent basis to analyze assessment data, student work products and to share teaching strategies.

Impact

Teacher engagement in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations has strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted implementation of the instructional shifts. Systematic analysis of student data and work products has resulted in mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers reported that as a result of the work conducted by teacher teams and subsequent cross-grade team meetings, that they should maintain a centralized resource for lesson plans and ancillary materials in a drop-box. Teachers also reported that they created a resource by analyzing data from the previous year's state exams. They analyzed student results and compared them to students' respective teachers in order to create a disaggregated list of the areas in which students are most successful and which teachers taught those students. The resulting list has been a source of inter-visitation schedules and the identification of lab-classrooms so that teachers could observe the best practices already utilized by their colleagues. A specific tool that has helped create instructional coherence across the school is the use of plastic picture frames as stands to be used for student groups during classroom instruction. These tools were in place in all observed and made possible the immediate issuance of differentiated instructions for all groups upon entrance to the room.
- During the grade 3 math team, teachers examined an error analysis report that detailed students' results on the common assessment administered at the close of chapter 10 of the *GoMath!* curriculum. Data indicated that there were three questions that deserved a closer look. 58% of students arrived at the wrong answer for question 2, 64% of students arrived at the wrong answer for question 9, and 57% arrived at the wrong answer for question 10. Using a protocol, teachers discussed the three questions and identified common issues resulting in students' arrival at incorrect answers. Teachers came to the conclusion that they need to design an intervention that will help strengthen reading and understanding math word problems and specifically, reinforcing use of the CUBE (Circle the numbers, Underline the question, Box key words, Evaluate, Solve) tool.
- Documents from a different teacher team show evidence of that team's target group of student mastery of the skills addressed in their inquiry cycles earlier in the year. Specifically, this team analyzed student results on a pre-assessment for informative writing. Data showed that 5 students increased their score by 1 point, 10 increased by 2 points, 9 increased by 3 points and 2 students remained at the same level. No student scores decreased.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

Common core alignment and integration of instructional shifts in curricula and academic tasks has resulted in coherence of and promotion of college and career readiness for all students. Emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills requires that all students demonstrate their thinking, however, additional development is needed in the design of methods of differentiation for special education students and ELLs.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff have collaboratively looked at the curricula to identify the gaps within the Ready Gen program's writing curriculum and to develop tiered tasks that expose students to more content specific vocabulary which requires them to utilize the academic terms in the justification of their thinking. For example, throughout the grade 4 curriculum students are expected to "quote from a text to provide evidence when writing and defending an opinion" and "use text evidence to make inferences about characters in a narrative."
- The kindergarten curriculum map has students support their ideas for writing with evidence gathered from the books they read. Kindergarten students are also required to reread their writing to make sure it is clear, revise and edit their writing, and reread their writing to make sure there is enough evidence to support their argument. The grade 5 curriculum map has students "solve multi-step decimal problem using the strategy work backward," "represent division by drawing diagrams and writing story problems and equations," and "convert measurement units to solve multistep problems."
- Lesson plans, across grades and subjects, require that all learners, including ELL and special education students, demonstrate their thinking. For example, the lesson plan for a grade 4 writing lesson shows detailed handwritten notes as to how the lesson is differentiated for special education students. For example, a number of questions are rewritten for specific students, indicated by name on the lesson plan. The lesson plan for a grade 5 math lesson includes differentiated group assignments in support of the lesson's essential question, "How can you use a formula to find the volume of a rectangular prism?" For example, group 1's directed strategy is "Use the strategy, make a table to solve the problem." Group 2 was directed to "Use two different ways to find the volume."
- Although school leaders and teachers have worked diligently to ensure that all curricula have embedded rigorous habits and higher-order skills so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking, the level of specificity used in these documents does not translate into reproducible teaching for a teacher new to the school. For example, the "Differentiation for ELLs and SWDs" section includes the following statements copied/pasted into each unit: "ELLs and SWD will be provided with graphic organizers for reading and language analysis," "Reading prompts provided to assist during partnership/group discussions," and "Small group instruction/reteach based on formative data."

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflecting a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across these same classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports.

Impact

Teaching practices across the vast majority of classes reflect school beliefs that students learn best through active discussion, engagement and reading and writing grounded in evidence from text. Strategies additionally ensure that all learners, including ELLs and SWDs, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 3 reading lesson, students were engaged in differentiated work that guided them through analysis of literature through distinguishing between literal and nonliteral meanings of work and phrases. Student groups were differentiated into two versions of the work. One group assignment instructed students to “Work with your partner to complete the graphic organizer to explain the nonliteral meaning of various phrases that are used in the text *Knots on a Counting Rope*.” This assignment included the extension “If you are finished, see if you can extend what you have learned by reading some short passages and explaining the nonliteral phrase in each short passage. Passages will be provided...” The second assignment variety instructed students to “Work with your partner to complete the constructed responses to explain the nonliteral meaning of various phrases that are used in the text *Knots on a Counting Rope*.” This assignment included the extension “If you are finished, see if you can extend what you have learned to a new text about a difficult time in American history by completing the multiple choice question and graphic organizer.”
- In a grade 5 English as a Second Language class, all groups were engaged in different “Math Talk” tasks. Each student group was assigned a focus question catered to the needs of the group with accompanying extensions. For example, one group was working on the focus question “Mr. Rodriguez works at a store. He wants to arrange 12 toys in a display shaped like a rectangular prism. The toys are in cube-shaped boxes. How many rectangular prisms with a different size base can he make with the boxes? Use the strategy make a table to solve the problem.” This group, as well as each group, had an extension attached to their group work.
- In a grade 3 math lesson, students were engaged in an activity wherein they would determine the number of tiles they would need in order to retiling a shower wall. Multiple entry points were evidenced in the different resources students had been issued in order to reach the same conclusion. Specific groups had been issued handouts with grid paper printed on the task, as well as sentence prompts, while other groups received colored tiles for manipulation by tactile learners, while all groups received a challenge question so that all students had the opportunity to extend their learning.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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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. In addition, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

High quality assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers' assessment practices result in effective instructional adjustments to meet all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Students came to a quick consensus when reporting on the use of assessments and rubrics with regard to written assignments and clarity around students' attainment of mastery. After receiving detailed rubrics with comments that include written feedback with next steps from teachers, students then conference with teachers on the feedback and how it can impact their writing. Students then improve upon their writing by implementing the next steps detailed in the feedback and again turn in their assignments to their teachers. One example of feedback reads, "Your answer includes a lot of information from the text and is nicely written. Next Steps: When writing your answer, be sure to think about what all of the text evidence is talking about." Another example of feedback reads "I like that you gave two details from the text. Next Steps: Be sure that your first sentence restates the words from the question and answers the question. You can also be more clear with your text evidence."
- During a grade 5 reading lesson, a teacher used the outcome of her check for understanding of students' question writing to generate the questions that groups of students discussed. The teacher's check for understanding revealed the following three model student-written questions that were placed on the Smartboard at the front of the classroom "Critique Eric's book on black holes just made for Annie and George. How does this book help George understand?" "If you were George, how would you implement a plan to save Eric?" and "Relate the size and power of a smaller black hole to a larger black hole." The teacher credited the questions' writers on the board as well.
- A grade three class, after discussion of an author's use of literal and non-literal meaning of text, projected a multiple choice question on the board. The teacher then instructed all students to write the letter of the correct answer on erasable slates. Once the teacher noted that all students answered correctly, she transitioned the class into the next step of the lesson.
- In a self-contained class containing students from grades 3 and 4, students were grouped based on an assessment that had occurred earlier in the lesson. As a result of the teacher's assessment practice, students were in one of three groups. Table 3 was assigned to work on "Page 563 #2 – 11." Table two was assigned to work on "Page 563 #2 – 7." Table 1 was assigned "Reteach" and had the direct attention of the teacher upon the start of this class visit.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations.

Impact

School leaders' communication of high expectations has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability. In addition, communication of clear, focused, and effective feedback along with supports has resulted in student ownership of their educational experience.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are provided a clear and descriptive outline of the expectations around teaching and learning, organized into categories by the different domains in Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. Feedback on *Advance* observations reveals high expectations for teacher practice, even where teachers are receiving Highly Effective and Effective ratings. The feedback is time-bound and specific to improving teacher practice and student outcomes, and shows that administrators will look for improvement in these areas the next time they visit.
- Teacher teams and staff communicate high expectations for all students through workshops that enable parents to serve as supports for their children toward meeting those expectations. One parent stated and all present agreed, "This school does so much to help us help our kids. The workshops are amazing. And there are so many." For example, topics of some of the workshops offered this year have been "Using Art and Drama to Support Literary at Home," "Thin and Thick Questions," and "Help Your Child Become a Better Reader: Questions to Ask Your Child While Reading Fiction." Another parent stated and all present agreed when she said "I get copies of assignments before my kid gets home so I can help him." Teachers use the Remind.com platform to empower parents to serve as active academic supports for their children. Another parent then said "My son's teacher sends home the chapter of math so that the parent can and will help with the work of the day or to prepare for an upcoming exam. My child's teacher is totally accessible and my son is blossoming as far as his work. His confidence has really gone up. Because of the school, we make sure our kids are ready for next year and when they graduate, they'll be ready for middle school."
- Grade teams send monthly newsletters and information regarding current units of study, hints for steps that families can take to help ensure students' success and provide workshops that make clear not only the high expectations to which students are held but also invite all adults into the education of students. For example, the third grade teacher team hosted a parent workshop in which "Questioning Techniques for Book Discussions" was discussed. During this workshop, teachers communicated high expectations around students' creating "thick" and "thin" questions, as well as "during reading instruction, we emphasize understanding what we read by dividing comprehension into two categories – Within the text and Beyond the Text."