



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 153 Maspeth Elem

Elementary School Q153

**60-02 60th Lane
Queens
NY 11378**

Principal: David Berkowitz

**Date of review: November 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Terrell**

The School Context

P.S. 153 Maspeth Elem is an elementary school with 1,334 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 6. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 7% Asian, 1% Black, 45% Hispanic, and 46% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 16% 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 94.8%.

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	Celebration	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	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	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	Focus	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure the alignment of the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, with an integration of the instructional shifts and academic tasks that are planned and refined around students' work.

Impact

Student work products reveal cognitive engagement for a diversity of students, which promotes college and career readiness skills across all grades.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have ensured the alignment of curricula to the Common Core through the use of *ReadyGen*, *Code X*, and *GO Math!* Teachers in the early grades are supporting students' writing through the use of a consultant writing program. The staff has strategically targeted the area of writing to support all students, by providing feedback aligned to the curriculum, which is being implemented across all grades. The specific feedback to students is around writing conventions, grammar, spelling, and structure. In addition, the grade 5 curriculum supports the development of writing through the use of the top hat graphic organizer to increase the inclusion of supporting details in students' writing products for this targeted grade.
- Students use close reading strategies supported by the implementation of the Socratic seminar, in which they engage in discussions that are based on evidence from articles and books. In a sixth grade social studies lesson, students were engaged in discussing how the character Malik changed in the book, *Malik had a House*. Students were required to restate the question, answer the question, cite evidence from the text and explain their answers. In grade 1, students develop fluency and understanding around math facts through the use of ongoing feedback from the classroom teacher.
- Teachers routinely plan to engage students in informational reading and writing. For example, in a first grade lesson the teacher plans for students to be cognitively engaged in organizing and writing original stories about reptiles, elephants and sharks and to use the information in their notes to stretch out their sentences.
- A schoolwide item skills analysis revealed the need for students to engage in additional work around comparing and contrasting. School leaders and staff have strategically supported this area of need by revising curriculum maps across content areas. For example, a lesson in a fifth grade class requires students to engage in a task in which they have to compare and contrast the values of a series of decimals in written and numeric form.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher teams engage in collaborative analysis of assessment data across grades. Various members from teams across the school provide collaborative feedback to school leaders in the decision-making process.

Impact

While teachers' engagement in building leadership capacity and in inquiry work is strengthening their instructional practices, their inquiry work is in the process of moving all students toward mastery of their goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has organized professional learning communities (PLC) across each grade. These teams are currently focusing on evaluating the use of materials to support the improvement of students writing. For example, in the grade 5 PLC team, teachers were reviewing the use of the top hat graphic organizer to support their students in producing more quality details in their writing. Teachers discussed and reflected on the need for students to move beyond identifying the similarities and differences in a unit of study to developing more strategies to incorporate this information into their writing pieces. One teacher shared with the group a more detailed graphic organizer that highlighted attributes the students could use in expanding their writing.
- Teachers stated that they work in teams to refine common assessments to guide their design of lessons on the grade. They review unit assessment data to determine the needs of the grade and students with respect to their progress toward meeting goals.
- A member from each PLC participates in a monthly meeting with the principal and his cabinet on the Instructional Leadership Team. They provide a voice in making decisions around professional development opportunities offered to support staff members in improving their craft. This team had an instrumental voice in the design of the writing feedback rubric, used to evaluate and provide feedback to students across the school, which was implemented this school year.
- The principal shared that while all teachers are engaged in collaborative work on the curricula for the PLC's, this is the first year of implementation, and they are continuing to refine the protocols they use to increase the depth of student inquiry.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across most classrooms, teachers consistently provide opportunities for students to access the curricula in small groups and participate in discussions.

Impact

Most students participate in small group discussions and engage in high levels of student participation at their grade level which is improving student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students were consistently engaged in collaborative small group tasks at their grade levels, with assigned roles such as recorder or speaker. Most lessons provided essential questions to focus the learning, such as “How is the make-a-ten strategy used to find sums?” In a fourth grade math class, small groups of students had different problems assigned to them and worked collaboratively to solve them within their group.
- In many classrooms, teachers utilized conversation prompts to guide student discussions such as, “I’m thinking” or “I’m wondering.” Other students were asked, “What strategy did you use?” Some students were heard using, “I agree”, or “I don’t agree because...” In one upper grade class, students were guided in an analysis of a character in a story with the question, “What does Aimee’s behavior at the beginning of the story tell us about her character?” In an early grade class, the teacher asked the students, “Which number is greater, eight or six?” and “How do you know?”
- In most classrooms, students participated in rich dialogues as they engaged in multi-step math problems, comparing decimals, writing original stories with expository text around topics such as bats, sharks and elephants. In one classroom, students were instructed to refer to an implicit questions chart, or to ask a neighbor if they were not sure about a question. After collaborating with a partner, some students then used their notes from a graphic organizer to add more details which provided more information to expand their sentences.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teachers use assessment data to identify grade level trends and analyze information around student learning.

Impact

Feedback from assessment data guides the school in its adjustments to the curriculum and instruction, which supports the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses chapter tests, unit tests and Measures of Student Learning data as common forms of assessments, to determine the needs of the students. For example, teachers conducted an item skills analysis and identified the need to provide students with additional support in the skills of comparing and contrasting. Students in grades kindergarten through grade 2 are assessed on their literacy levels and teachers keep running records to track their progress. In addition, performance based assessments are used to assess the needs of students in the upper grades. A schoolwide evaluation of student writing prompted the school to design a writing feedback rubric, which is tailored to the proficiency levels of writers on every grade and has been part of the refinement of the writing curriculum.
- Students state that their teachers provide them with feedback on their writing which identifies their strengths and next steps in order to help them make progress toward their next goal. Students also state that they are provided with opportunities to revise their work that leads to higher level of proficiency on the writing rubric. The school is in the process of evaluating benchmark assessment data that will inform additional adjustments to the curriculum, as well as target specific student needs.
- Rubrics are attached to students work highlighting areas of strength and next steps. For example, on a grade one writing task, the student was provided feedback on a strength which stated the use of two sequenced events. A focus area was to write three or more sentences about one topic.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has communicated and established a culture of high expectations for its school community. Staff are supported in improving their pedagogy and families are provided with expectations for high quality work for their children.

Impact

Teachers' and leaders are mutually accountable for student progress through a practice of self-reflection to improve their instructional practices. Ongoing communications with families around college and career readiness provides supports for their children's increased achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers state that the principal has provided them with a plethora of professional development to support high expectations in their classroom practices. This is evident in a book study around *Teach like a Champion*. These study group sessions allow teachers to discuss successful research-based strategies to support students' achievement. Early childhood teachers are working with a consultant to develop structures to improve students' writing.
- The principal provides a weekly newsletter which is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Strategies that support effective questioning around component 3b are shared through this ongoing communication. The principal has scheduled common planning time to support teachers in designing lessons that reflect rigorous tasks. The principal expects this time to be used to make refinements to the curriculum and follows up with assistant principals who regularly monitor the work of the teachers.
- Teachers engage in learning walks and intervisitations of peers to gain more fluency in the implementation of instructional strategies, in order to move all students toward proficiency in grade level expectations. For example, teachers stated that they visited some of their colleagues to learn a strategy to support students with disabilities improve their work around comparing and contrasting.
- Parents complimented the principal on his accessibility to them and their children. They receive weekly communications on events occurring inside the school, as well as school field trips. This is communicated to them via an electronic "Flip-a-Gram" every Friday. The principal also provides a monthly newsletter. Parents state that teachers text them to make them aware of units of study and provide a monthly grade newsletter, which highlights expectations for their children along with academic units of study, projects and rubrics. In addition, they are able to meet with teachers on Tuesdays, as part of the citywide initiative to increase parent engagement, to discuss their children's work. A parent stated that the principal shared with them, "If kids don't learn the way we teach, we teach the way they learn."
- The school offers parent workshops around the writing rubric, the Common Core, tackling tough text and rigorous writing, as well as preparing for the middle school experience. Parents state that the use of technology, such as email, texts and the "Flip-a-Gram," keeps them informed of what their children are doing inside and outside of the classroom.