



# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**P.S. 197 The Ocean School**

**Elementary School Q197**

**825 Hicksville Road  
Queens  
NY 11691**

**Principal: Christina Villavicencio**

**Date of review: March 1, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

## The School Context

P.S. 197 The Ocean School is an elementary school with 568 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 55% Black, 39% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 18% English Language Learners and 21% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.2%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Proficient</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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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 and teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

### Impact

The instructional capacity of teachers is strengthened from their inquiry work which typically results in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- An inquiry team meeting focused on discussion and analysis of the work of a targeted group of students who answered a series of questions related to interpreting bar graphs. Teachers concluded through analysis that English as a New Language (ENL) learners performed overall the most successfully. Thoughts about why the ENLs had the highest average score included the scaffolds in place and purposeful use of organizers during classroom instruction. General education and special education teachers suggested all students may benefit from the inclusion of more scaffolds and organizers, similar to those provided to the ENLs. Next steps suggested by the ENL teacher involved sharing of graphic organizers with future lessons and in-class assessments to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers noticed that girls, unexpectedly, struggled more than boys with their bar graph interpretations. Teachers agreed to ensure girls are included more with checks for understanding and group discussions.
- A review of inquiry team meeting minutes from a variety of grades shows a clear focus on curriculum, homework, communication, and school goals. Minutes from a grade 5 meeting reference a discussion about the skill of the week and a need to repeat the instruction next week. Additionally, one of the assistant principals will address the classes individually regarding their level of homework completion. Other minutes from meetings address the use of student self-assessment checklists, efforts to align and inform students of their *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) levels with their *Fountas and Pinnell* level, and structures necessary for implementation of Teachers College writing strategies in current lesson/unit plans.
- Staff shared their instructional capacity is strengthened by their inquiry practices, intervisitations, and weekly meetings. Through the inquiry approach, the staff reflected on data and developed the skill of the week in order to inform teachers of their instruction by “targeting certain skills.” The staff uses the skill of the week assessment results to drive learning rounds which are self-selected to promote school-wide goals.

## Area of Focus

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

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best with work products and discussions.

### Impact

Instruction consists of uneven levels of student thinking and participation as is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and instructional shifts.

### Supporting Evidence

- Staff shared they try to “let the students do more of the class” and plan their instruction with high engagement activities, higher order questioning, and opportunities for multiple entry points. An observation of an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class showed a student being asked to “walk us through your processing,” while the teacher wrote the student’s steps on the board without verifying or confirming them for accuracy. In a grade 4 classroom, students were asked to turn and talk with their partner regarding the reading of a novel, although limited opportunities to critically think were evident. Rather, most students responded only with simple explanations and redirected their thoughts to the teacher exclusively when she walked around. An observation of grade 3 classroom showed students working in small groups and being given opportunities to talk to one another, however there were minimal multiple entry points for the varied learners in the classroom.
- Group work was planned and observed in most classrooms visited. During a visit to a self-contained classroom, two students, who were assigned to work at a stamping station, were directed to stamp their notebook page and write the letter that begins the word with the image. However, both students only stamped their notebook pages without completing the task. As a result, opportunities for students to identify the beginning letter were missed, thus limiting their understanding of the word beginnings. In a kindergarten class, students were assigned to work with peers who had similar reading levels. One boy who did not have his book open expressed that he does not know how to read, so he just follows along with his group. Consequently, structures for students needing additional support were absent.
- Several classes had students arranged in groups according to a pre-established criterion. In a dual language class, students were able to explain, “we do different groups of red, yellow, or green and we move on if we get them all right.” Students in the green groups explained they move onto the more challenging problems, while the yellow group played fraction bingo, and the red group remained with the teacher for more explicit content instruction. Although the students understood their roles, it was not evident that all students could reflect on their assigned task for accuracy, as the teacher was unable to attend to all groups while working with the red group. Additionally, this approach to strategic implementation of tiered instruction was not observed across most grades and contents.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards or content standards so curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

### Impact

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions that build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular planning documents exhibits the inclusion of appropriate Common Core Learning Standards to emphasize rigorous habits throughout grades and content areas. Many lesson plans include an expectation that students will collaboratively explore text, using essential questions as a guide. Specifically, one grade 1 math lesson plan notes that students will focus on key details using the readings from various sources and make connections to how they could group cubes to show numbers as tens and ones. On a grade 3 *ReadyGen* unit plan, students are expected to explain how readers recount stories using text-based details to understand the central message.
- An emphasis on the inclusion of academic vocabulary as an instructional shift is highlighted on most plans. An Integrated Co-Teaching lesson plan includes a section for word resources and steps to teach tricky words using erasable boards and verbal reinforcement. Other lesson planning documents include targeted vocabulary instruction using letter sound cards, vowel extension charts, sentence frames, letter-sound drill routines, phonics songs, lists, and benchmark vocabulary identification.
- Lesson plans identify specific structures for students with disabilities, such as strategic grouping. Grouping is often formed based on reading levels or prior assessments according to the lesson plan documents. A week-long unit plan for math instruction includes having students complete the quick check to determine their tier. Students below level will be re-taught, while those on level will move on their own, and the above level students will move on their own to an enrichment page. Another unit plan focused on teaching the use of adjectives to explain the character in a story, and identified three groups for instruction. One group will work independently to complete a graphic organizer, another will revisit the text to answer a few specific questions, while the third group will work with the teacher in a small group to help them analyze how characters act in the story. Most lesson plans include specific group work through the inclusion of formative data results.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school’s curricula to determine student progress toward goals in most grades and subject areas. Additionally, teacher’s assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### **Impact**

Limited feedback is provided to students from teachers regarding their achievement. Results from assessments are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction effectively to meet the needs of all students.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Self-assessment reflection forms are completed by students in some classes. Students are required to identify the writing goal they accomplished and what areas they found most difficult on the assignment. Following submission of the reflection form, the teacher provides written feedback on areas of strength and areas to work on next for the student. Several examples of teacher provided feedback include, “don’t forget your subtitles, they will help your reader understand what that reaction is about” and “try to add in more transition words with commas,” and “use more dialogue in your story.” Students shared the reflection forms and feedback help them know what they need to master.
- Feedback on student work products was inconsistent throughout most classrooms. Samples of student work reviewed in the classroom and from students reflected some with detailed feedback and others with simple marks or just checks of completion. For example, glows and grows were typed out for all students on a grade 4 social studies assignment about the history of African American inventors. Student achievement according to the accompanying four-point rubric was also provided. Colored sticky notes were found on many student work products with reminders for next steps and noticings by the teacher. However, glows and grows written on student work in a kindergarten class did not permit students to understand the meaning of the comments since most students do not yet know how to read anecdotal teacher feedback. Although most students shared they received feedback, they were not all able to explain how they used it to inform their next steps.
- Grading policies established by teachers include the use of weekly reading skill assessments “to understand what students have mastered so [they] can focus granularly.” The assessment information is shared with administration and discussed at common planning times. The use of reading data appears to be fairly consistent, however, similar practices are not detailed for math and other core instructional courses.
- Students across grades and core content areas, with support from their teachers, maintain a portfolio with work products with a cover page. This cover page displays DRA data, identifies the writer on a scale from novice to expert, and notes levels of success on all skill of the week assessments. Students are able to visualize their progress by looking at the growth on their portfolio cover page.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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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 and detailed feedback.

### Impact

A system of accountability for high expectations exists for staff, and students are provided guidance and supports that prepare them for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership communicates regularly to staff and students that “all children can learn” and teachers should consider their instruction as if it was being given to their own child. Students confirm that the expectations in the school communicate “responsibility and positive affirmation.” Emails and monthly newsletters perpetuate the message of high expectations to staff and students. Weekly professional development sessions are held during which staff engage in discussions and ongoing training related to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and *Framework for Great Schools*. Additionally, a priority focus exists to increase student’s skills in the four domains of language acquisition in English Language Arts and math.
- Feedback provided on Annual Professional Performance Review evaluation forms encourages staff “to ask deeper, thought provoking questions that may go beyond... the task that allowed for engagement.” Additional expectations defined by school leaders for staff include “creating more effective open-ended and higher-order thinking questions.” Professional development and coaching opportunities for teachers support and align with the school’s goal of improving critical thinking and questioning during instruction.
- Students all agreed that the “school helps us get ready for middle school” by providing resources needed to learn more about the selection and application process. Several students also felt the inclusion of rigorous assignments over holiday breaks further supports their learning and preparation towards middle school. One boy shared his math teacher has them “do math work from the next grade,” so they are challenged. All students who were asked about their reading level were able to articulate they knew it and it was important, because it allowed them to “know what to get from the library.”
- Saturday academy classes are offered to all students for extra help. A vast majority of students report that they attend the classes. Some students shared they felt the classes allowed them to understand the concepts from different teachers and reinforced their understanding.