



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**PS/MS 200 - The Pomonok School & STAR
Academy**

Elementary-Middle School Q200

**70-10 164 Street
Queens
NY 11365**

Principal: Kevin McAuliffe

**Date of review: November 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince**

The School Context

PS/MS 200 - The Pomonok School & STAR Academy is an elementary-middle school with 494 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 13% Asian, 22% Black, 47% Hispanic, and 15% White students. The student body includes 6% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.8%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

There is a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, families and students. There is effective communication of expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

As a result, there is a sense of mutual accountability amongst the stakeholders. Parents play an active role in supporting students throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- As stated in interviews with teachers, parents, and students, the school community has clear expectations for pedagogical and professional practice. This is further evidenced by verbal and written communication to all constituents. Teacher team meetings, parent meetings, and regular meetings with the principal are all documented. These expectations, as stated by the principal, include that every student will graduate with the skills and knowledge reflective of a strong and engaging learning environment. The Danielson *Framework for Teaching* is used to communicate high expectations related to preparation and planning, learning environment and classroom instruction. Parents shared that the principal is a strong leader and is available night and day, remembers all students' names and really cares.
- The school uses a Building Coherence tool that establishes high expectations for instruction through targeted observation feedback and teachers supporting each other's professional growth. Teachers have been trained in collaborative inquiry teamwork to collect and analyze data. This has increased mutual accountability vertically and horizontally throughout the school. Every Friday, the principal sends a message to staff and reinforces his vision to support a school culture of high expectations. The Learning Partners Program Team implements an action research plan to support teachers in rigorous lesson planning including organizational and academic skills needed to set student goals for moving toward college and career choices. Staff, students and parents track their progress so that they meet requirement for attaining these goals. There are student events to acknowledge student improvement and a middle school honor roll, which highlights and motivates students to improve and achieve higher levels of performance.
- All classes visited had structured small-group discussions with task-based learning and organizational skills needed for college and career readiness. A clear reflection of integration of the Common Core Learning Standards as well as instructional shifts reinforces the 21st century skills that students need in order to be successful in college and beyond. There is a monthly class newsletter sent home to parents as well as a principal letter stating the school-wide expectations. Families are invited to monthly Coffee & Conversation meeting with the principal. There has been a series of workshops for parents and families and the parent coordinator provides one-on-one support for families so that they can access and understand the NYC school account and participate as partners in their child's education.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Assessment, including common assessments and ongoing checks for understanding are aligned to the school's curricula and used strategically in most classrooms to make adjustments and push students to think critically.

Impact

In some cases, there are missed opportunities for assessment, limiting feedback to teachers and students and hindering student awareness of next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- There are rubrics for all assignments and checks for understanding across classrooms. Grading policies are aligned and students and teachers are provided with actionable feedback. For example, students in the lower grades hold up fingers/cards/sticks and colors to show an understanding of the targeted lesson, groupings are purposeful and flexible, and think/pair/share is a common practice. Exit slips are also used to check for understanding and inform next teaching steps. In some cases, there are missed classroom opportunities for assessments, including checking for understanding mid-lesson, therefore limiting feedback to students and hindering awareness of their next steps.
- There is a school wide-grading policy and subject-specific benchmarks. Baseline and diagnostic assessments are used at regular intervals. Gathering data and monitoring each student's progress over time is embedded into the school-wide system. Lower grades teachers use *Fountas and Pinnell* scores to facilitate groupings. Teachers use checklists and conferencing notes to identify who needs immediate attention during a lesson. Students are aware of their reading levels and discussed with me how important it is to read every day to get to the next level. Students are aware of the importance of writing and one student explained that he needed to write stronger conclusions.
- Teachers access and analyze student outcomes and progress through benchmark assessment, as well as formative and summative assessments. Bulletin boards and classrooms displays show student work with rubrics with actionable feedback. However, refinement of assessment and feedback systems do not yet consistently ensure that students and families have a clear understanding of what their child is doing well and what they need to do to succeed.
- The administration and all teachers examine the use of assessment to determine the levels of rigor and ensure that they are effectively aligning assessments to key standards in literacy and math. For example, assessment data reviewed saw that grade 2 students struggled with the base ten numbers system. Teachers then adjusted their practice to regrouping students and providing scaffolding by way of charts and graphic organizers. However, the school does not yet consistently apply the practice of Understanding by Design to ensure that assessments within each unit of study are aligned to the curriculum.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. There is coherence across grades and subject area that promotes college and career readiness, rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and rigorous habits for all learners. Across grades and content areas, academic tasks push student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula maps and unit plans provide evidence that the school develops rigorous academic tasks through the adaption of the Understanding by Design approach. Instructional materials, adapted to the Common Core by inquiry teams, are ReadyGen, Expeditionary Learning, and GO Math!. These teams documented the strengths and gaps in each program, promoting curricular coherence for grades kindergarten through eighth grade in math. Teachers on the curriculum development team identified the need for more problem solving task-based lessons and determined that *ReadyGen* did not offer adequate opportunities for Common Core-based writing for the elementary grades. As evidenced in discussions with teacher teams, teachers in lower grades developed their own writing tasks tied to content areas. In addition, practices based on *The Writing Revolution* are building skills across grades and content areas.
- Students explain their thinking using evidence and teachers have revised writing rubrics across grade levels to align with the Common Core. In a fourth grade science class the teacher was facilitating and student groups were presenting on "Should we use pesticides in habitats of the gastric brooding frog?" Each group table had feedback charts that listed criteria for supporting details to support an argument. T-Charts and science vocabulary words were also available to assist with meaningful conversations. Through purposeful curriculum decisions there was active engagement, differentiation, essential questions based on the text and students were learning skills needed for college and career readiness. Through organizational demands and productive struggle with understanding the text, all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, were learning 21st century skills needed to be successful in college and beyond.
- Planned strategies include tiered academic vocabulary, multi-step problem solving, argumentative writing, and text based responses, geared to increase readiness in college and career. Unit plans in all content areas illustrated multiple designs of academic tasks with numerous scaffolds and entry points for all learners and extensions for the advanced learners. A third grade science lesson observed used an anchor text on *Wild in the City* to present academic vocabulary such as urban, carnivores and nocturnal. Assorted graphic organizers and leveled texts were used to push student thinking. Students in a seventh grade class engaged in solving word problems and differentiated instructional resources ensuring success for all students were present.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and reflects a coherent set of beliefs about student learning that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Teacher strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula and the use of scaffolding and effective questioning strategies, along with multiple entry points, enable all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Pedagogy is aligned to the curricula and informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Academic vocabulary has been embedded into the lesson planning for all students, not just for ELLs or struggling learners. In a fifth grade general education and Integrated Co-Teaching class, students were determining algebraic equations and using patterns with decimals. There was 'banking' vocabulary, relating the lesson to real life. Ownership and a clear framework for problem solving skills were evident. There were peer helpers, share and show work and a group with the teacher was challenged to lead themselves. Using multi-step problem solving each student had time to unlock the problem and discuss the information in an organized and easy to understand way. Students were aware that they would be sharing out at the end of the lesson.
- Across classrooms, students justified responses by citing textual evidence, had peer interactions and focused on backing up their statements. Teachers made connections to the world by explicitly connecting concepts to everyday experiences and encouraging inquiry. Students were encouraged to collaborate often in small groups or pair/share discussions. In most classes observed, there were rubrics, language prompts and sentence starters if needed to enable all learners to be engaged and succeed. However, extensions for higher performing students were not always in place. In addition, some stronger students often took over during the discussion process, therefore limiting the opportunity for all students to participate. Students stated that they engage in problem solving assignments in every subject area setting the stage for college classes.
- Teachers were often conferring with groups in classes visited. Students at the student meeting expressed that they are comfortable talking with each other and discussing their thoughts on a subject as well as participating in writing peer assessments, and self-assessing. They were all familiar with rubrics and students in in all grades were aware of how they are being assessed. Students receive actionable feedback from teachers during lessons and on assessment tasks, enabling them to set personal goals and take ownership of their work. As evidenced by a second grade lesson on *Chair for My Mother*, students had rubrics, groups had vocabulary cards and different discussions were going on at each table. There were *Depth Of Knowledge* questions on differing levels given out for discussion and students had speaker sticks for sharing both peer to peer and with the whole class.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership. A shared vision has led to inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations.

Impact

The work of teach teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, and improved pedagogy, and student work. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in regular collaborative inquiry. The grade 5 team observed follows the same inquiry protocol as other grade teams, creating consistency and coherence across the school. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements by reviewing units of study using the *EQUIP* review process with a focus on implications for teaching and student outcomes. The grade 5 teacher team observed was looking for trends in writing in relation to student work presented by one teacher and gaps were isolated and reasons discussed to improve planning such as different rubrics and differing instructional practices. Concrete next steps were presented for the teacher presenter to use before the next inquiry meeting. All grade level teacher teams use structured protocols to look at student work.
- The principal stated that the Learning Partners Program has provided for distributed leadership structures through Model Teacher positions. Key decisions in subject areas that affect student learning and goals are presented at team meetings, discussed and then presented to administration. As a result, the teachers, with administration input, developed a shared online space where teachers can upload, modify and review the products of their teamwork. Teachers work with the administration to make any adjustment to the Professional Learning and Assessment Calendar. Grade teams are empowered to design and modify curriculum and to analyze the curriculum for alignment and coherence to the Common Core and instructional shifts.
- Teachers record meeting notes in the shared Google Drive and are provided with weekly opportunities for vertical team collaboration. Middle school planning time in subject areas is built into the schedule. Elementary level teachers have common prep periods during which they review and revise lesson plans and make curricular decisions that affect student outcomes. All decision making is shared and distributive leadership structures have formed as a result of high expectations for students and a culture of professionalism and trust. All teacher teams engage in weekly structured professional learning tied to student assessment. They aim for 85% of students to have progressed toward, achieved, or exceeded grade-level benchmark assessments by June 2016. The Q&A with the inquiry team explained how they use essential questioning, key ideas and details to craft and structure lesson planning. They also discussed that they plan professional development based on a special focus, create units within the curriculum, and have developed an active participation in the classroom protocol to encourage meaningful discussions in whole group as well as peer to peer activities.