



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**P.S. 229 Emanuel Kaplan**

**Elementary School Q229**

**67-25 51<sup>st</sup> Road  
Queens  
NY 11377**

**Principal: Sibylle Ajwani**

**Date of review: December 18, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Terrell**

## The School Context

P.S. 229 Emanuel Kaplan is an elementary school with 1,457 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 39% Hispanic, 23% White, and 35% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.9%.

## 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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and staff ensure the curricular is accessible to a variety of learners, with alignment to the Common Core Standards and a strategic focus on the instructional shifts that is refined to support academic achievement across all grades.

### Impact

Strategically refined units of work across all grades and content areas provide all students with access to college and career readiness skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff have intentionally selected a curricular that is aligned to the Common Core Standards and the instructional shifts. Students use ReadyGen for literacy and EnVision for math. In addition, students in self-contained classes are provided with Pearson's Reading Street to further support vocabulary development with an emphasis on using technology. In grades K-2, students use Foundations and ReadyGen Phonics to support vocabulary development. Students in grades 3-5 use Worldly Wise, a systematic academic vocabulary development program.
- Through an analysis of formative and summative data, school leaders and staff have purposely targeted academic vocabulary as an area of refinement in the curricular. Tier 2 and Tier 3 words are incorporated into the curricula across content areas. For example, a review of a kindergarten curriculum map on a unit of study around winter reflects an emphasis on incorporating details to build vocabulary. A student task required the students to acquire an understanding of sequence words by using the words *first*, *next*, *then* and *last* to write about building a snowman. Another task required students to write a personal narrative about an experience they had in the winter using picture word cards such as *sledding* and *reindeer*.
- The curricula has been refined to support academic vocabulary words. This is reflected in classroom word walls with content specific words to support students in developing language around explicit topics. For example in a grade 4 classroom, students were reading the book *The Human Skeleton*. The students' independent task required them to act out the words flexible, expand, hinge and affect. They then read the text to confirm their understanding of the meaning of the words. The task also required the students to come up with synonyms for each word, in addition to using a graphic organizer with questions to determine the genre of the text. All classrooms have content specific word walls on display.
- Teachers and coaches have added a math problem solving tool kit to the curricula by grade levels, in order to support students in focusing on the language in solving math problems. Word problems in the tool kit have been refined to support cognitive engagement in areas such as geometry, place value, multiplication, division and subtraction. In a second grade class the math task required the students to break apart the number they were subtracting and to show their work. English Language Learners worked with visuals and manipulatives to develop language skills. In a grade 5 class the students were working on a division problem and were required to use the words quotient, partials, divisor and expanded form in their responses and written work.

## Area of Focus

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

Most teachers consistently use questioning and scaffolds in tasks, in order to support students' comprehension. However, across some classrooms, not all students are engaging in discussions to demonstrate high levels of higher order thinking and ownership of their learning.

### Impact

As a result of differentiated tasks and student participation, student work products and some discussions reflect that students are in the process of moving toward higher order thinking and ownership of their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students are working in small groups to complete assigned tasks. For example, in a third grade class the students were conducting a gallery walk in which each group had a specific task to complete related to questions about a field trip. Students in group 1 had to answer part A. Students in group 2 had to answer Parts A and B. Students in group 3 had to answer Parts A and B, then try Part C as their next step. While all classrooms have small groups, not all students are participating in rigorous discussions to challenge critical thinking.
- In one classroom, many students were being challenged to demonstrate their math understanding by using the acronym CUBES (circle key words, underline the question, box key math action words, evaluate what steps do I take, solve and check). Students were asked to engage in discussion at their tables and share what they learned. However, this strategy is not consistently used across all classrooms to support all students in moving toward ownership of their learning. In a lower grade classroom, students were working on, "*Air all around us*". Using tubing, a plunger, and a plastic syringe, the students worked in pairs as one tried to push the air out of the tube, while the other student tried to block the air flow. The teacher posed the questions, "Is it hard to get air in?" The students responded, "Yes." The students were allowed to explore the concept of pushing air into a small space as the teacher introduced the word, "compression." The students were asked, "Who can tell me what compression is?" The students did not respond and the teacher provided an answer to the class.
- In an upper grade class, students worked in their math workbook on solving division problems. The students were asked to estimate the quotients in two digit divisors. The teacher worked with students seated in the front of the classroom, while the other students worked independently in their workbooks. The teacher circulated among the students seated in the front as they worked. The students did not engage in a discussion on strategies used to solve the problems

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classroom, teachers use multiple assessments to adjust instructional decisions and track students' progress toward mastery of goals.

### Impact

As a result of an analysis of on-going formative and summative data, school leaders and staff have targeted specific areas in need of additional academic growth, which has led to instructional revisions of the curricular. The use of common assessments allow teachers to track students' mastery of goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership has aligned its grading policy to the District's policy with some modifications to support the curricula. Grade level rubrics are created by teachers and coaches to reflect the expectations of mastery of content. Students have check-lists to guide them in self-assessing their mastery toward articulated goals. Teachers use a variety of assessments to provide data on students' academic achievement, such as running records, Performance Based Assessments (PBA's), unit tests in addition to summative assessment from State item analysis. Across all classrooms student work products reflect rubrics with levels of proficiency and feedback to guide students' movement toward their identified goals. In addition, a review of hallway bulletin boards shows students work samples that also provide grade level standards, an identified task and feedback for students to reflect upon.
- Summative and formative assessments are used to guide teachers at the end of the year in formulating tentative small groups for the new school year. Every teacher receives a portfolio of students' work from the previous teacher with written information on students' mastery towards grade level standards. This data is reviewed by the receiving teacher and used to group their new students for instruction. Teachers state that this information provides them with feedback on the skills they need to target for their students and allows them to design tasks aligned to students' needs for meaningful instruction on the first day of class.
- The use of common assessments by teachers on the grade, such as end of unit tests, allow teachers to have a base line to track students' academic performance. For example, there has been a 25% increase in students' meeting mastery in constructed responses. This data is also used to generate adjustments to instructional practices and to the curricula to support school wide goals. For example, as a result of an analysis of student responses to short response questions, writing samples were revised across the curriculum with an emphasis on using a two point rubric to provide students with actionable feedback on meeting expectations of mastery in their constructed responses. In grade 4 an analysis of students writing revealed the need for more details in comparing and contrasting. Students were provided with graphic organizers to develop their thesis with supporting evidence, a clear introduction and conclusion for their essays, such as "Martin Luther King is very Brave." In the lower grades students are provided with normed rubrics with levels of proficiency. For example, capitals and periods and words that match illustrations.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Schools leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, the school partners with families to establish a culture of high expectations for college and career readiness skills.

### Impact

As a result of communications around high expectations, teachers have expressed a mutual accountability in supporting the leadership and each other. Families express that they understand how to support their children in meeting high expectations, as a result of their partnership with the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal states that all teachers are held accountable for meeting high expectations aligned to the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. Accountability is supported with on-going feedback on instructional practices aligned to the school wide goals for improving academic vocabulary to build Tier II and III comprehension and constructed responses by students. Additionally, professional development has been provided to the staff on strategies to improve instruction for vocabulary, such as identifying a set of words to teach during the reading of a text. Teachers take on mutual responsibility to support high standards across the school as they open their classrooms for inter-visitations by other staff members.
- A culture of mutual respect for supporting professional development is expressed in teacher led workshops on implementing the *Danielson Framework for Teaching*. A review of teacher Advance Ratings data demonstrates that 18.9% of teachers are rated at the highly effective level, with 81.1% at the effective level. Teachers hold each other accountable and engage in book studies to inform their understanding of the cognitive learning process with books such as *Healing ADD*.
- The school partners with families to support an understanding of instructional strategies used with the classroom. Parents state that on Tuesdays, they meet with teachers to discuss strategies to improve students' writing by using graphic organizers or how to support their child in demonstrating the steps to solve a math problem, by showing their work. Parents also state that they feel empowered to support their children through their participation in workshops, such as preparing for Middle School, understanding the ReadyGen literacy program, the Common Core Standards as well as dealing with the emotional impact of bullying. Parents partner with the school to support college and career week by coming to the classroom to participate in discussions about their careers.
- The principal communicates with all school constituents through, *The Villager*, a monthly newsletter that shares school wide events and expectations for students' performance. The parent coordinator and PTA both send letters to each family to inform them of activities that will be occurring at the school. Families participate in Math Night with their children where they enjoy learning and playing math games. The school's website provides all families with information on the grading policy, units of study, as well as PTA and SLT minutes.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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**Findings**

All teachers participate in structured professional learning communities and inquiry teams to share best practices aligned to the instructional shifts. Teams analyze a variety of data, instructional practices and student work samples aligned to the school’s instructional goals to increase student achievement.

**Impact**

Embedded school wide practices around building academic vocabulary and detailed constructed responses has resulted in coherence of instructional practices that have increased students’ attainment of targeted goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school engages all teachers in vertical professional learning communities (PLC’s) to analyze data, offer refinement to the curricula and share best practices across grades to improve student achievement. In addition, grade teams meet to streamline practices to support specific grade level mastery of skills for targeted students. PLC’s have strategically targeted their work to support the instructional shifts and support the school wide goals of increasing academic vocabulary, adding details in constructed responses as well as comparing and contrasting texts.
- Teachers analyze student work and prioritize strategies to support areas for growth. For example, in the 3-5 PLC, teachers reviewed constructed writing responses for students. The data revealed that students were not providing details to answer the questions. They were not staying on the topic or defending their opinions. In response to this data, teachers across the grades shared instructional strategies that they were using that were showing significant student growth. Teachers incorporated best practices such as, restate the question, answer the question, cite the evidence, explain your answer and sum it up (RACES); turn question into the statement; answer the question, give more details (TAG); state your opinion, locate evidence from the text, add further explanation, make a meaningful conclusion ( SLAM). Teachers focused on an excerpt, *Honeysuckle House*, from the grade 3 state exam and worked on unlocking the questions to improve students’ understanding of what was being asked.
- Students work samples were reviewed with and without the use of RACES as a support for the constructed response in answering the questions, “Describe an effect humans have had on the underwater ecosystems” and “Using information from all 3 paragraphs, explain how “Trouble in the Coral Reefs” is an appropriate title. On a normed 2 point rubric, the student work showed an improvement of 25% with the use the RACES writing strategy check list. These practices have moved students toward mastery of their writing goals.
- In addition, a review of teacher’s minutes indicate that they take a question in which students must take a side and use evidence to support their opinion. This strategy is used as a “Do Now “activity every morning to support improvement in students’ writing in alignment to the instructional shifts.