



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. / I.S. 266

Elementary-Middle School Q266

**74-10 Commonwealth Boulevard
Queens
NY 11426**

Principal: Nicole Scott

**Date of review: December 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

P.S. / I.S. 266 is an elementary-middle school with 663 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 43% Asian, 14% Black, 24% Hispanic, and 17% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.7%.

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	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	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
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Findings

School leaders and staff constantly communicate expectations for high levels of shared accountability for staff and student learning and provide training to help staff meet the expectations. All staff members communicate and partner with families to support all students in meeting college and career readiness expectations.

Impact

Ongoing communication of and support for high expectations for all staff foster mutual accountability for improving teaching and learning across the school. Strong partnerships among staff and families contribute to students' progress in meeting high expectations for their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff members receive ongoing professional development from school leaders and teacher leaders and collaborate with other peers in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to share best practices for improving instruction in all classrooms. Based on 2014-2015 Measures of Teacher Practice (MOTP) data and teachers' self-selected professional goals, school leaders support teachers in aligning their practice to targeted components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. PLC activities focus specifically on designing coherent instruction, questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction. Observation reports show that school leaders provide teachers with actionable feedback on these elements of their practice. With peers serving as hosts in the Department of Education's Learning Partners program and turnkeying activities to staff across the school, teachers receive added support for their pedagogy.
- During the teacher team meetings, several teachers stated that the principal sets clear expectations for teaching and learning through a school-wide instructional focus on "accountable speaking and listening for effective communication." School leaders utilize a monthly calendar, weekly staff meetings and other professional learning sessions to reiterate expectations for each week, including classwork, homework and assessment expectations. Teachers reported that school leaders hold them accountable for meeting expectations by participating in team activities, visiting classrooms regularly, and following-up with feedback conferences. School leaders also work with all teams to implement protocols for effective use of scheduled team times and for sharing data about grade and class level performance, to inform planning and professional learning across the school.
- Through a "Curriculum Corner" newsletter, a family book club, emails, texts, resource packets and face-to-face meetings, especially on Tuesdays and during "Open School" events, staff members inform families about expectations for their children and offer them strategies for working with their children. Traditional progress reports and reports from online data portals such as *Engrade*, *Class Dojo* and *Edmodo*, keep families abreast of their children's progress towards meeting expectations. Families also learn about expectations for their children through grade-specific workshops and "Coffee with the Principal" which feature curriculum-based activities each month. Partnerships with families result in funding for resources such as trade books, learning center materials, trips, software subscriptions and iPads. Families also help coordinate co-curricular music, drama, service learning, and character education activities for students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school's assessment program provides feedback on student performance and informs adjustments in curricula and instruction across grades and content areas. Teacher assessment practices do not contribute to a clear portrait of students' mastery of learning goals across the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact

Although assessment practices are aligned to curricula and identify gaps in student learning across classrooms, students do not consistently receive meaningful feedback that provides a clear picture of their progress towards mastery of targeted skills. There are missed opportunities to further adjust instruction to increase levels of mastery for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Assessment calendars by grades and subjects indicate that at the start of the school year, all students received a Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) diagnostic assessment to determine their reading levels and set learning goals. Teachers also implement common assessments across grades and content areas and engage in item skills analysis of data from 2015 New York State English Language Arts (ELA) and math, *ReadyGen*, and *GO Math!* assessments, which inform teaching points and strategies. Data from *Schoolnet* baseline assessments added information about student progress in relation to targeted standards and skills. Teachers are now engaged in additional assessments to further identify student needs.
- As part of school leaders' emphasis on Data Driven Instruction (DDI), all assessment calendars are aligned to school-wide curriculum calendars and denote specific periods for focused progress monitoring across all grades and content areas, through collaborative data review sessions. Based on their findings, teachers determine needed adjustments to curricula and instruction, which they outline on action plan sheets to improve their students' performance on unit tasks. The principal noted that as a result of a review of grade level assessment data, all teachers now engage in inquiry activities linked to flexible grouping and differentiation of tasks for all students, and infuse additional listening and speaking tasks in re-teaching activities for all students. During a team meeting, the Spanish teacher noted that he uses ELA item skills data to differentiate instruction for his students and to deepen alignment of his lessons to Common Core Standards.
- Teachers use a school-wide grading policy, aligned to curricula, to provide feedback to students on their performance in all disciplines. Bulletin boards also show that teachers use a variety of rubrics, including task-specific rubrics, to assess student proficiency and content knowledge related to specific performance tasks across grades and disciplines. During the meeting with students, a majority stated that they use rubrics and checklists to guide completion of tasks in class and for homework. However, some feedback seen on student work on bulletin boards and in student folders consisted of the teacher only circling portions of the rubric, with little meaningful feedback to explicitly identify actionable next steps for the student to improve the work. In addition, a few of the students interviewed were not able to clearly state what they needed to do to improve the work, based on the feedback written on the work that they shared.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and illustrate strategic integration of instructional shifts. Teachers constantly collaborate to create increasingly more demanding units of curricula for all learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

A school-wide commitment to continuous alignment of curricula to relevant standards results in coherently sequenced Common Core-aligned units of study with rigorous academic tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- A curriculum calendar provides an overview of topics, content and sample tasks for each unit of instruction across all content areas and grades. All units of study reflect alignment to Common Core Standards and instructional shifts and highlight topics, skills, essential questions, texts, target vocabulary, sample tasks and assessments. Teachers use modules from *ReadyGen* curriculum to support the infusion of literacy-based tasks across all content areas. Math curricula include the Common Core-aligned *GO Math!* program and units of study linked to *EngageNY* resources, for additional focus on math instructional shifts and word problems. A *Skills and Strategies* workbook further supplements Common Core-aligned instruction and enrichment activities in math and ELA. Content from the New York City scope and sequence and Common Core-aligned texts guide inquiry-based instruction in social studies and science.
- All teachers collaborate to create unit plans that extend curricula and infuse tasks designed to support a school-wide instructional focus on “Accountable Speaking & Listening for Effective Communication” by all students. Curriculum maps illustrate sample tasks that require students to engage in activities such as math problem solving, composing explanations of inferences from texts, preparing summaries of reading selections, and writing on topics across content areas. In addition to units of instruction for core content, curricula includes rigorous content and tasks that build college and career readiness skills across all grades and subjects. This includes units for Spanish as a foreign language in grade 1 and up, fine and performing arts activities, debates, and chess. It also includes a *Growth Mindset* program tied to an Academic and Personal Behavior Expectations Code (APEC) and a related “Real Heroes” character education program that engages students in service learning projects, presentations from real heroes and reading of texts about heroes.
- Curriculum documents illustrate academic tasks that are linked to multiple entry points to learning via the use of visuals, sentence frames, manipulatives, and technology-based supports which are embedded in unit maps. A grade 7 math task required students to show real world application of unit rates, by using art, flyers from grocery stores and products at home, to design a math project. A grade 4 science task involved use of online resources to research and report on the contributions of Steve Jobs to technological applications today. Enrichment and remediation activities linked to web-based resources such as *Think-Central*, *Castle Learning*, *Edmodo*, *World Book Online*, *Safari Montage videos*, and *Brain Pop*, extend curricula for all students, by providing online links to scaffolded and interactive remediation and enrichment tasks across all grades and content areas.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All students engage in high level discussions and complete intellectually demanding tasks in the vast majority of classrooms. Teaching practices demonstrate applications of multiple entry points and extensions of tasks for all learners.

Impact

Through consistent application of scaffolds and extensions of curricula, all students engage in rigorous tasks and discussions that culminate in high quality work products across all grades and content areas and foster student ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In all of the classrooms visited, teachers provided visual supports and scaffolds for students at all levels to be highly engaged in learning. In a grade 1 class, the teacher used an interactive whiteboard with pictures and words corresponding to the names of animals and mimicked the sound each animal makes, to guide students to identify the name of the animal in English. The teacher followed up getting students to repeat after him as he introduced the Spanish word for each animal's name. Next he distributed a worksheet with pictures of animals and their names in Spanish and students engaged in matching each animal's picture to its name, with support from the teacher and their peers. Some of these types of supports were also noted in a grade 4 math class where, after modeling a problem of the day, the teacher challenged students to use counters, a place value chart and math talk with peers, in illustrating strategies for solving word problems assigned to each group.
- In all classrooms visited, teachers used guiding questions to engage students in high level discussions that allowed them to express diverse points of views and challenge each other's thinking. In a grade 2 math class, students engaged in high level peer-to-peer questioning and discussion as they worked to solve one and two step word problems. Across the room, students used math vocabulary posted on a chart to engage peers in a debate about how to solve problems as they experimented with "bar models" in adding and subtracting numbers within 100. Similarly, the teacher of a grade 8 science class introduced a Socratic seminar activity, dividing the class into an inner and an outer circle group of students who took turns expressing their points of view and challenging their peers thinking about the impact of climate change on human evolution. They cited evidence from articles distributed to them and from their own experiences to provide the rationale for their positions.
- The use of extensions of tasks to deepen student engagement in challenging work was evident in several classrooms, including a grade 5 ELA class, where groups of students designated as "novices, apprentices, practitioners or experts" used a checklist for informational writing to critique work done by peers. Many students could be heard "teaching" others how to improve the work, others graded and wrote "glows" and "grows" in offering their peers ideas to be "like a reporter" and a few worked on creating their own essay based on the checklist and a sample exemplary informational writing piece. In a grade 6 social studies class, similar practices resulted in students having the opportunity to choose "a main dish, four appetizers and one dessert", all representing diverse learning tasks that extended their learning about ancient Egypt. Tasks included activities such as: students reading articles in print and online to create postcards about the Nile; drawing, coloring and writing about Egyptian clothing and jewelry for a fashion show; reporting on the discovery of the Rosetta Stone; and designing a "Help Wanted" advertisement for the job of a pyramid builder.

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

Teams of teachers meet regularly to collaborate on practices and strategies for improving staff and student achievement. Distributed leadership structures are embedded and facilitate effective teacher leadership.

Impact

Through extensive teamwork and shared leadership structures, teachers improve their pedagogy and play an integral role in key decisions that improve teaching and learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teamwork drives ongoing integration of Common Core Standards and instructional shifts in curriculum units with tasks that require all students to engage in close reading, navigate complex texts, and explore academic vocabulary in discussions and writing activities, across all grades and content areas. Using the *Scaffolded Strategies Handbook* related to *ReadyGen* curriculum units teachers refine unit tasks linked to Common Core-aligned texts that are used in all classrooms. Teachers also use anchor papers, checklists and rubrics to create writing tasks that reflect alignment to grade level expectations for writing across genres, as outlined in the Lucy Calkins' text, *Writing Pathways: Performance and Learning Progressions, Grades K-8*. Team members reported that they modified literacy content and tasks from *ReadyGen* by switching the sequence of topics in units and adjusting pacing to cover all genres in writing.
- All teachers are programmed for weekly team meetings and common planning sessions which allow them to collaborate on lesson and unit planning as well as school-wide inquiry activities. The school-wide inquiry team targets activities linked to Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals and the school's instructional focus. Through the use of the DDI protocol, teacher teams regularly engage in reflections on student work to monitor student progress towards Common Core-aligned learning goals and expectations. The middle school math team examined gaps in student learning from a unit, as part of their inquiry work focusing on students in the school's lowest third subgroup. Participants identified standards and skills for re-teaching to improve the work. Teachers reported that similar inquiry work revealed gaps in students' extended writing skills, which has led to schoolwide inclusion of additional project-based tasks in units of instruction to further develop student proficiency in writing across all genres.
- Teacher leaders facilitate weekly cycles of professional development activities for peers in PLCs and design their own learning experiences. The Learning Partners team hosts professional learning activities for peers as well as staff from other schools who visit the school to learn about the use of a "Growth Mindset" program to strengthen students' academic, social and college and career readiness skills. Members of other teams such as the Consultation and School Development Committees work directly with peers and administrators to develop curricula, plan and facilitate professional learning activities and implement instructional initiatives. The principal noted that team activities continue to build teacher capacity to deliver high quality instruction, as noted in *Advance* observation data, and have contributed to improvement in student achievement, as measured by gains for all students tested on the 2015 New York State English Language Arts assessment.