



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Gordon Parks School

K-8 Q270

**233-15 Merrick Boulevard
Queens
NY 11422**

Principal: Chayvonne Harper

**Date of review: May 3, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

The Gordon Parks School is a K - 8 school with 681 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 97% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 0% English Language Learners and 14% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.9%.

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	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Celebration	Proficient
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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. The school provides ongoing information to families regarding student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Ongoing communication and support has increased teachers' understanding and awareness of school leader's expectations around teaching and learning. The school's communication with families provides opportunities for them to understand student progress towards meeting the standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Frequent classroom observations provide feedback utilizing Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* as the standard for professionalism and quality instruction. Each rated item on observation reports includes specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating along with actionable next steps. These are then addressed in subsequent classroom observations. For example, a teacher's observation report contained feedback for engaging students in learning that read, "Ensure that your student audience members are active participants in all presentations and are engaged in the learning process on a daily basis. Ex. They can be provided with a presentation rubric for peer to peer assessment." A subsequent observation report for the same teacher conducted within the following two months showed an increase in rating in "engaging students" from an ineffective to an effective.
- The professional development (PD) committee meets regularly to assess teacher need through analysis of observation data disaggregated by the different domains of Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. Using this data, the PD team determines whole school PD. Whole-school PD has been delivered focused on domain 3d, (Using assessment in instruction). School leaders use this same data to guide their individualized work with teachers in support of their growth. Individual teacher PD plans were provided, evidencing that each teacher had been paired with up to two focus domains. Also included in this PD plan for each teacher were the details of meetings held with leadership and the next steps discussed at each session. Noticings throughout the year on the varied levels of success have resulted in the decision to add domain 1e (Designing coherent instruction), to the end of this school year as well as the beginning of 2016-2017 so as to support the use of assessment through a focus on planning.
- Parents praised teachers' use of PupilPath for communication regarding their children's progress. One parent added that her child's grade 4 teacher sends expectations and goals for the following week to parents through PupilPath. Additionally, school leaders offer feedback to teachers in support of their written feedback to students. For example, on a student work product the principal wrote, "I liked the feedback to support the student. However, you didn't provide next steps." Another example reads, "She [the student] received the same feedback in November. What strategies can you model or share?"

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points to cognitively engage all students.

Impact

Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best. There was some evidence of teaching strategies that provided multiple entry points for students to access the curriculum. However, strategies were uneven across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders identified student-to-student discussion through the use of protocols as the first part of their school's belief about how students learn best. In a grade 6 social studies class, students were directed to engage in a turn and talk exercise in which they discussed the strengths of the pharaoh to whom they had been assigned. However, across grades and subjects this practice is inconsistent and teacher centered instruction was observed in a majority of classes. In a different grade 6 class, students were asked to list the items that were buried with pharaohs along with answering the question of whether archaeologists should excavate ancient burial grounds. In a grade 5 class, students were asked to identify the benefits of making text-to-text connections. Student responses to these questions were directed at the teacher. Subsequently, all follow-up questions originated with the teacher and were answered by individual students without any discussion between students.
- There were missed opportunities to engage all learners in challenging tasks and higher order thinking. In a science class, student groups were tasked with preparing presentations that would explain characteristics common to all plants. Each group was to write an essential question on the board that all students in the class were to answer. While two groups wrote high-order questions, "Why are seedless plants important?" and "What can you infer about the classification of plants?" a third group asked "Name the first three parts of a flower and define them." Additionally, the tasks to which each of the four groups were assigned unevenly engaged students. Group one was to complete a worksheet about plants and then create a lesson plan around the covered material. However, group two was to complete a cloze reading exercise in which students filled in the blank spaces from a provided list of words, following this with the writing of "...a story to be told to fourth graders." Also, group three was assigned to fill in the blanks on a "Flower Parts" worksheet that included a picture of the cross section of a flower. While there was evidence of high-order thinking, engagement was inconsistent.
- In a grade 6 class, students were grouped and moved through four different stations. The tasks at stations one through three focused on different learning styles while station four had a laptop at each desk where students engaged in individualized work through the TenMarks online math support platform. However, in a grade 8 social studies class, students were tasked with creating and subsequently writing their questions while viewing the film *Schindler's List*. Students were then asked to turn to their "left-elbow partners" and ask their questions and have them answered. This led to some measure of confusion for students as to whom they should ask questions and whose questions they should answer while students who had been sitting alone had no partners and so worked alone.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

Impact

Coherent curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curricular documents across grades evidences purposeful decisions to infuse *GoMath!* and ReadyGen Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula with instructional shifts. Evidence shows multiple examples of the infusion of reading and writing grounded in evidence from text. In a grade 1 writing task where students are to reflect on what they've learned about becoming a classroom citizen, arguments need to be supported by evidence. In a grade 2 social studies unit, students are tasked with researching a historical figure and presenting on this subject with evidence to be presented in support of findings. In a grade 5 science unit, students are tasked with writing an informative essay that describes what is happening to rain forests. In this essay, students are expected to use evidence in the forms of graphs, charts, definitions or quotations to support their work.
- The instructional shift requiring that students apply math concepts in real world situations is evident in curricular documents. In a grade 6 lesson plan, three of the four stations focus on work that has students apply math concepts to real world situations. One station task involves students determining the costs that would be paid in the purchase of two distinctly different selections of breakfast from a menu. Another station tasks students with the computation of hours spent volunteering for two people given separate scenarios. In a grade 5 lesson plan, students are to represent real world data of their choosing on a plot, chart and diagram.
- A diversity of learners benefit from access to academic tasks as evidenced in a grade 6 social studies lesson plan wherein students are to research an ancient Egyptian pharaoh and synthesize the information learned into a presentation needing to include information differentiated for different learning styles. This work is supported by a detailed rubric, carried out by students in heterogeneous student groups, while using graphic organizers differentiated for students with disabilities. In a separate grade 6 class, students with disabilities were grouped together while the ICT teacher facilitated a lesson with identical objectives as the lesson used for the general education students; for students to write an argument for or against the archeological exploration of Egyptian Pharaoh's tombs and to support that argument with textual evidence, supported by a differentiated set of materials from the text as well as an additional motivation question.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback regarding their achievement. Data from common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Feedback consistently reminds students to refer to research conducted and textual evidence to support claims. Some examples of that feedback were: "You have identified a claim and supported it with evidence. Let's work now on the formal essay structure," and "Be sure to use more transitions words/phrases and include more details in your conclusion." One student said, "The teacher writes comments on how I can improve on every draft. I use them to rewrite everything."
- Teachers and students use rubrics as assessment tools and feedback mechanisms. In a grade 7 science class, each station included a rubric specific to the task. Students also use common self-assessment checklists on topics such as peer editing, planning, revising, informative writing, and opinion writing. Additionally, rubrics were used as assessment and feedback tools attached to work in student portfolios as well as displayed on bulletin boards in hallways and in classrooms.
- Analysis of students' results on *GoMath!* assessments resulted in decision to embed supports for mathematics instruction through the TenMarks online platform in grades 6, 7 and 8. School leaders and teachers also found that students in grades 4 and 5 were having difficulty with solving multi-step word problems. As a result, teachers began the practice of implementing grade-wide problem-of-the-week. Subsequent discussion on this initiative revealed that students at the top and bottom thirds were not well served and therefore, the decision was made to issue three questions-of-the-week differentiated as such. Analysis of students' results on ReadyGen writing assessments resulted in a focus on writing for the 2015-2016 school year as well as the design of curricular addendums that detail writing tasks across grades and subjects.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams use a protocol in their analysis of student work once every month.

Impact

Teacher teams' use of an inquiry approach is developing across the teams. Teacher teams do not identify groups of students as a focus for their work.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are engaged in a variety of structured professional collaborations that do not use an inquiry approach but do further the mission of the school. Committees focus on topics such as writing, library management, student behavior, assemblies, grant writing, and trip management. Teachers also serve on committees focused on instruction such as the professional development (PD) committee and the instructional cabinet.
- The grade 6 team uses the Atlas Protocol to guide their analysis of student work. This protocol asks teacher first to identify and describe the student work to be analyzed. Then, student work is interpreted, implications for classroom practice are determined and all teacher present reflect on the analyses conducted during that meeting. During a grade 6 team meeting, student work was analyzed from an assignment in which students read a passage about the excavation of Egyptian burial grounds. Teachers discussed the uniformity of students' writing in paragraph form, grammar and mechanics as well as students' use of evidence to support their arguments. Although there is evidence that teacher teams are using the Atlas Protocol to guide their discussions of student work, the grade 6 team did not use this protocol during the observed teacher team session. Additionally, across teams this work occurs once every month.
- One team reported that they meet to discuss schoolwork as they are not administering common assessments between their classes. Teams have not identified target student groups with which to conduct inquiry work. Instead, there is a rotation as to which teachers bring student work for team analysis during that particular sessions. At the next session wherein student work is analyzed, the teacher who had presented work during the previous sessions will sometimes report on that student's, or students', progress. After this report, the team moves on to the teacher who is to share work at this session.