



# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**P.S./I.S. 295**

**Elementary-Middle School Q295**

**222-14 Jamaica Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11428**

**Principal: Deon Lavigne-Jones**

**Date of review: May 13, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

## The School Context

P.S./I.S. 295 is an elementary-middle school with 546 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 38% Asian, 25% Black, 28% Hispanic, and 5% White students. The student body includes 11% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.3%.

## 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>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>Proficient</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>Celebration</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**3.4 High Expectations**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates a unified set of high expectations.

### Impact

Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness. Supports ensure that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff members use tools such as JupiterEd, emails, texts, phone calls and grade-based weekly newsletters to communicate high expectations to all students and families. The principal hosts weekly “Coffee and Tea” sessions with parents that are regularly and well attended. One parent said, “Whatever questions the principal can’t answer at Coffee and Tea, she will find the answer and get back to you.” Parents served as guest speakers at the school’s Career Day on March 23, 2016. Students also reported that career explorations at the school have helped them refine their career goals. Specifically, one student reported that as a result of the work she conducted to prepare for her Career Day presentation, she has decided to become a neurologist. Other students spoke to career goals such as veterinarian, journalist, chef, firefighter, and young adult fiction writer. One parent reported that her son had wanted to become an automotive mechanic and that as a result of his research and Career Day presentation, he refined his career goal to becoming an automotive engineer.
- Thirteen of the school’s 55 grade 8 students, representing 24% of that cohort, are enrolled in an Algebra class culminating in the Algebra Regents exam in June 2016. In June 2015, 14 students took and passed the Algebra Regents exam. This student group had a 100% pass rate and represented 24 % of that year’s grade 8 cohort. In furtherance of sustained success of this initiative there is a planned expansion into offering living environment to grade 8 students, in addition to the algebra class for the 2016-2017 school year. Additionally, the school’s chapter of the National Junior Honor Society, an organization that honors students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of scholarship, service, leadership, character, and citizenship will be inducting 21 new members into its current membership, increasing total membership to 74 students.
- Across grades and subjects, students take ownership of their learning through the use of graphic organizers that require students to indicate glows and grows for their work as well as self-designed educational goals. Posted student written grows include statements such as; “I need to work on my sentences,” “I need to work on calculation,” and “I need to organize my writing.” Additionally, achievement goals were posted throughout the school representing a variety of skills such as; “My goal for this mystery unit is to be better at finding details and clues,” “My goal for opinion writing is connecting my ideas with examples,” and “By the end of this ‘Shapes’ unit, I will be able to identify and describe 3-D shapes in the world.” Grows and goals were evidenced in classes containing students of all achievement levels, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

Although students are strategically grouped and engaged in hands-on learning, and their work products reflect high levels of thinking, teaching practices result in teacher-centered instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, students were engaged in hands-on learning while working cooperatively within groups. In a grade 7 social studies class, student groups were presenting their research conducted around westward expansion and centered on a specific photographic document. Each student had a specific role. In a grade 6 science class, students were engaged in station learning wherein each station presented students with a task, each differentiated from the previous. Two stations involved reading, while other stations asked of students to illustrate, write, watch or experiment. In a grade 2 class, students were heterogeneously grouped and engaged in an activity that required them to cooperatively weight a variety of items using a scale and chips that weighed either one, five or ten grams.
- Across classrooms, uneven use of discussion techniques resulted in students directing responses to their teachers while follow-up questions were directed from teachers back to individual students. In a grade 4 class, students conducted a turn and talk discussion around the question “What about the word ‘memoir’ looks familiar to you?” In a grade 6 science classes, students were asked to turn and talk around their findings at their respective stations just prior to moving on to each new station. Also in a grade 2 class, as the teacher modeled the use of a scale students were asked to turn and talk around the question “Should I continue with adding only 1 gram chips at a time? If not, what should I do?” However, in a grade 8 math class, individual students answered the question “If the answer to this question is not a whole number, is it rational?” directly to the teacher. In a grade 2 class, students answered the question “Why do you think the doctor asks to weight you but not measure your mass?” directly to the teacher.
- Review of student work products across the school revealed students’ high levels of thinking. For example, posted in a grade 8 classroom is an essay about the poem *Solace*, by Dorothy Parker in which a student wrote about the poem’s theme of solace matched with sadness, supporting that argument by discussing the poet’s first stanza about a dying rose and second stanza about a dying bird and the responses heard by the narrator.
- Whereas school leadership reported that the school’s belief about how students learn best involves hands-on learning and engaged through discussion techniques, across classrooms these practices were unevenly reflected. Teacher-centered instruction was observed in a majority of class visits.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### 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

- Curricula calendars across grades and subjects are constructed using the Common Core Learning Standards aligned *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* and *GO Math!* programs. School leaders and staff decided to return to these programs after having switched to *ReadyGen* and *Expeditionary Learning* a few years prior. This decision came after reviewing state exam student success data gathered by teacher teams. The school also ensures curricula coherence with the New York City (NYC) Social Studies Scope and Sequence and the science New York State (NYS) Standards.
- The instructional shift requiring that students develop their skill in writing from sources emphasizing the use of evidence. In a grade 6 social studies lesson plan, students are to explore how westward expansion of the United States led to the development of America's culture using evidence from the class text. In a combined kindergarten and grades 1 and 2 class, including some students with disabilities, students were expected to use evidence as they write a descriptive piece about a butterfly. The instructional shifts in math are also evidence in curricular documents. In a kindergarten unit plan, students were engaged in a project leading them to identify shapes in the real world. In a grade 7 math lesson plan, students were to find the square root of 800 using a calculator and again without a calculator. This is followed by students writing about the steps they took that revealed the correct answer as well as describing their understanding of the processes they followed.
- In a grade 4 lesson plan, all students were expected to analyze an informational text by determining the main idea and supporting details along with developing understanding between the relationships of opposing arguments. This lesson also detailed the students making up the "Focus Group" that conducted the cooperative portion of the lesson with the teacher as extra support. The grade 6 science lesson plan indicated the three "tiers" of differentiation to be implemented during the lesson to ensure that all student groups would meet the same expectations. In this class, stations were designed to direct students toward understanding how populations and ecosystems work together to sustain life. This lesson plan detailed the ways in which groups were differentiated by design, such as the inclusion of current and former English as a new language (ENL) students grouped together along with having students with disabilities grouped together, and having an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teacher follow that group to each station. Additionally, the lesson plan indicated the teacher's planning for an extension activity to help ensure that all students, including those who are on-level and beyond, are cognitively engaged.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Teachers' use of assessments and rubrics provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement as well as make effective adjustments to support all students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Some examples of that feedback were, "Be sure to include a strong conclusion and watch for correct grammar and punctuation," "To go to the next level, you need to thoroughly develop and support your argument with evidence," and "You need to expand your position and increase your use of outside sources of evidence." Additionally, there is evidence of teachers giving actionable feedback in response to a students' self-assessments. For example, on posted work a student wrote; "I need to work on calculation." The student's teacher offered as a follow-up response; "You need to work on explaining your answer." Another student wrote the following self-assessment; "I need to work on explaining my work." The student's teacher offered as a follow-up response; "Next time, you can work on finding a word to identify the pattern."
- Across classrooms, rubrics and post-it based assessments are used as tools of supports for student growth. Rubrics have been individualized to specific assignments as well as the different target audiences for which they are designed. Across grades, rubrics asked students to self-assess. Rubrics used in grades 4 and 5 asked students to self-assess while having a peer student comment on the writer's self-assessment. Another example had students conducting a self-assessment that was then furthered by a teacher assessment. There were also examples across grades of students writing glows and grows for their work, peers' work as well as examples of students making comments in response to their peers' glows and grows made about their work.
- Teachers continually check for understanding throughout daily lessons through check-ins and make adjustments or re-design student groups according to the results of those assessments. In all classes visited, student were grouped based on assessment data. During a grade 4 social studies lesson, students were grouped based on English Language Arts (ELA) exam data due to the writing focus of the activity. In multiple classrooms, flexible grouping charts are used to direct students to their groups as they change based on data and the different skills targeted throughout a lesson. In a grade 8 math class, the teacher redesigned the groups for that lesson based on results from the exit ticket issued at the close of the prior day. As a result of that assessment data, one group was offered additional supports toward accomplishing the lesson's focus.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze data and student work for students they share.

### Impact

Teachers' collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Teacher team work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have strengthened their instructional capacity through team collaborations. In one case, a teacher reported that at a meeting a colleague spoke about how students in that teacher's class are required to include their name when they conduct peer edits or assessments. This helped increase accountability for comments as well as support student growth. In addition, teachers at this team spoke about having students comment on the feedback that is given to them to embed the process of reading and using that feedback. As a result of these conversations, a majority of teachers have implemented this practice, as evidenced by a variety of rubrics and formats observed on bulletin boards across the school.
- Teachers use teacher teams as a base for intervisitations. Special education teachers conduct intervisitations and when sharing-out, discuss noticings of their own practices as well as their co-teaching content area partner teachers. These teachers also spoke to conducting visits to classes where there are no special education teachers in order to help general education teachers develop strategies in serving their lowest performing general education students. One teacher reported that "We're working on formulating hot question and increasing rigor." Another teacher reported that "The debriefing time after the intervisitations is just as important as the visit."
- The combined grade 6, 7, and 8 teacher team reviewed student samples of an assignment requiring that students build robots using graph paper. Subsequently, students were required to make computations given the geometric shapes used in the building of those robots. When looking at one particular work product, a teacher asked if this work had been completed by a high-level student. The teacher who had brought this to the meeting replied "No. That is why this is such a pleasure! This student has clearly excelled." Another teacher added; "Most low performing students [had] improved. But some forgot to explain their formulas. We will need to push that for the next cycle."