

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. Q993

K-12 All Grades Q993

**85-15 258th Street
Queens
NY 11001**

Principal: Jaqueline Zaretsky

**Date of review: January 20-21, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen**

The School Context

P.S. Q993 is a K-12 all grades school with 535 students from grade kindergarten through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 19% Asian, 24% Black, 40% Hispanic, and 15% White students. The student body includes 33% English Language Learners and 99% students with disabilities. Boys account for 68% of the students enrolled and girls account for 32%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 87.8%.

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	Focus	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	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:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best as informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Lessons reflect planned essential questions and strategic individual pacing and supports.

Impact

Discussion at teacher team meetings have fostered teacher collaboration, a common language to describe effective teaching, and produced a coherent set of beliefs on how students learn best. Teachers engage all learners in tasks that promote higher order thinking skills resulting in student work that is cognitively appropriate and demonstrative of rigor, and student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Classroom instruction/lesson planning includes differentiated activities, multiple entry points through leveled texts, graphic organizers, manipulatives, visual aids, and assistive technology. The school community believes students learn best by being engaged in purposeful lessons that directly relate to their lives and include embedded opportunities to engage in productive conversations with peers and adults. For example, students were presented with a problem; being bullied, and then worked with a partner to discuss potential solutions for that problem.
- The school provides and encourages teachers to participate in workshops that build capacity in their classrooms, such as the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) trainings. From September to December 2015, staff members attended 48 workshops in seven specific areas of concentration. During a UDL teacher team meeting, the focus was “the way students learn is as unique as their fingerprints”. Teachers discussed how each student in the classroom brings their own background, strengths, and interest. Instructional supports and strategies were suggested and considered to meet the individual needs of specific students. In addition, the overarching question was “how do we incorporate the principles of UDL to give all students access to lesson objectives”.
- In a high school alternate assessment class, students viewed a photo of Chinese traditions and customs. Groups were pre-determined according to Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) results; Group 1 currently below basic level, groups 2 & 3 on basic level, and group 4 at proficient level. Each group was given one item related to Chinese culture and were asked to; hypothesize what they were seeing, make assumptions as to their potential use, then share their thoughts with the class. Finally students were asked to share a tradition from their own culture either verbally, using communication devices if applicable, written, or through artwork.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders ensure the coherence of the school's new Common Core-aligned curricula with integration of the instructional shifts and consistently utilize multiple resources to emphasize rigor and higher order thinking skills for all students in their learning tasks.

Impact

The school's curricula decisions is building coherence across sites, promote student engagement, academic achievement, and college and career readiness skills. Presently, structures to deepen, expand and refine curriculum maps are in progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals were designed to increase higher order thinking skills and rigorous habits within their chosen curricula across grades and subjects. School leaders stated the focus for 2015-2016 school year "continues to remain on planning instruction and evaluating student work". For students who participate in standardized assessment, *Ready Gen* and *Go Math* are implemented for English language arts and math instruction, respectively. Students who participate in New York State Alternate Assessments (NYSAA), programs such as *Attainment* and *Unique* (academic subjects), are aligned to the Common Core. School leaders assert that the following programs; *4Rs Curricula*- Reading, Writing, Respect, Resolution (social/emotional learning) and *Getting Ready to Learn* (daily sensory practice to help students with autism focus) are adapted and modified to align to the Common Core. Presently, 118 staff member are trained and an additional 28 will be trained this year.
- The school's belief of assuring access for all learners is ensured in all lesson planning. *First Author Writing Curriculum* and *First Author Writing Software* provides multiple entry points for students in alternate assessment. The curriculum is task-based, allows students to choose a topic, and provides built-in accommodations for all learners. The curriculum focuses on the individual elements of a lesson, while considering the learning styles of students, their learning modalities, interests, and readiness skills. It assures contributing and participatory roles for all learners. For example, in a (12:1:1) high school class, students were learning about the characteristics of a reptile. Students were asked to cite textual evidence to support their assumptions. Use of the Attainment Curriculum is building coherence across the school and is reflected in SANDI scores. For example, in ELA, there is a 77-point increase and in math, a 39 point increase from Fall 2014 to Fall 2015.
- The school is very vigilant in their planning and refining of curricula maps. Teachers revise and organize curricula maps by subject areas, grade, and social skills development. Teachers engage in analysis of data and student work, which informs curricula refinements. Teaching methodologies and teaching strategies such as; Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Webb's *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* questioning techniques are discussed during teacher team meetings and integrated into lesson planning. For example, in a high school class for students with autism, the math teaching point was for students to "estimate the lengths of given objects using correct tools" and compare with other groups in class.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, the school uses common assessments and rubrics aligned to its curricula to analyze student work, monitor student understanding, make adjustments at the team and classroom levels, and provide meaningful feedback to students.

Impact

The strategic use of varied assessment data aid in adjusting curriculum and classroom practices, thereby, increasing student growth. In addition, student self-assessment tools help guide instructional decisions and provide clear learning goals so that students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school believes that assessment data is an effective approach to drive instruction, create IEP goals, and monitor student learning. For example, following each unit of study, assessments are administered to capture student progress for targeted skills as noted in students' portfolios. Teachers and students, reference learning goals throughout the instructional period as demonstrated during class visits. Goal specific feedback is provided through the use of common rubrics of student performance. The school participates in the District 75 "For All Rubrics" pilot program. The rubrics are skill or task based, leveled to meet the needs of the diverse student population, and provide the opportunity for students to self-assess and peer assess. During classroom visits, teachers provide time for students to self-asses using rubrics constructed by teacher teams.
- Across all classrooms visited, teachers monitor student progress through strategies such as the use of questioning, based on DOK levels, by teachers and paraprofessionals. In all classes visited, paraprofessionals are integral participants in data collection during instruction. This data along with student self-assessment are used to guide instructional practices and determine student groupings. Ongoing checks for understanding include pre-planned questions for paraprofessional use during small group instruction as evident in teacher lesson plans. During the small student meeting, students stated "if they need help, to make their work better, they can talk to teachers and paraprofessionals".
- Assessment results and student work samples are reviewed on a weekly basis as seen during a collaborative team meeting. The results are used to determine next steps such as; subsequent lesson planning with the inclusion of additional aids and supports including sentence strips, cue cards, and verbal prompts. In one class, the teacher encouraged a student to utilize various action words to demonstrate an increase in vocabulary growth.
- Based on the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) 2014-2015 school year, data shows 54% of students scored level 3 in math and 46% in ELA. For standardized assessment students, Scantron data indicates a 100 point gain in reading and a 69 point gain in math. In addition, data indicates that out of the 22 administered Regents exam, 17 students passed at least one exam and one student passed three exams.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders have created a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all constituents provides professional development opportunities for staff and families, and college and career readiness skills for students. The use of Danielson's *Framework for Teaching* ensures best practices for all learners.

Impact

School structures foster collaboration among school leaders, staff, students, and families to communicate a cohesive set of high expectations throughout the school community. As a result, students are prepared for transition from school to work and the community.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are consistently communicated to staff through a variety of means, both verbally and in writing such as the staff, student and parent handbooks, emails, instructional memos, post-observations, faculty meetings, and collaborative team meeting, as stated by teachers. The NYC School Survey 2014-2015 indicate that 93% of staff agree that school leaders set high standards for student learning and staff's professional growth. School leaders and staff work as a team in study groups developing and planning for workshops supporting best practices identified in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Staff members hold themselves accountable by submitting feedback from workshops attended to inform future professional development activities. Teachers stated there is an expectation to provide turnkey trainings, ensuring a culture of high expectations, continuous improvement for both students and staff.
- High expectations for classwork and behavior are modeled by all staff members as seen in classrooms visited. Students are reminded of academic and social/behavioral expectations for instruction as lessons are introduced. Skills such as self-management, self-awareness, and respect are actively taught, addressing college and career readiness skills. Students were consistently asked to "turn and talk" to their partner. During a science lesson for students were asked to "describe, analyze and connect" how the moon moves around the earth and how long it takes. Students were required to work in small groups, listen to one another, come to consensus, and then share their findings as a team.
- There is an emphasis on communication and partnerships with families. Parents stated there is consistent outreach and support from all staff members including related service providers. School leaders conduct ongoing social events that provides opportunities for families to participate in the social/behavioral process. Parents stated they feel "listened to, supported, valued and informed" by all staff members and school leaders. The school's open door policy, affords all members of the school community the opportunity to discuss concerns, fostering a culture of mutual accountability. In addition, the school provides training for families on assessments, resource fairs, and linkages to adult agencies which are in place prior to students' graduation. To support English as a New Language (ENL) students and families, the school provides Title III Saturday Institute workshops focusing on speaking and listening skills. In addition, parents are informed on how to use technology to support their children.

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

All teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based teacher teams focusing on curriculum development, student work, and instructional practice. Embedded leadership structures encourage teachers' voice in key decisions from planning curricula to improving teacher practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams results in teacher leadership throughout the school, where deep collaboration amongst colleagues lead to identification of best practices resulting in increased student performance.

Supporting Evidence

- Teams and committees were established to promote a culture for academic rigor and appropriate social/behavioral development. Teacher teams meet at least twice weekly, are very specific and deliberate, and designed to foster and promote higher levels of student thinking and learning. There are 24 teacher teams including: Curriculum, Assessment and Rubrics, Safety and Positive Behavioral Intervention Services (PBIS), Data, Individualized Education Program (IEP) Compliance and Teacher Practice. Collaborative teachers review student work samples and data sheets with the focus building teacher capacity and implementing the Common Core and the instructional shifts.
- During a teacher team meeting, the focus was Universal Design for Learning (UDL). The school implements UDL as its approach to curricula because "it minimizes barriers and maximizes learning for all students". The school's philosophy of "every learner is unique and each learner in a classroom brings their own background, strengths, needs and interests" is in line with UDL methodology.
- Teacher teams engage in analysis of data and student work products, which informs curricula refinements. Teacher teams differentiate learning opportunities to meet the needs of all students as evidenced in their unit plans, lesson plans and student culminating activities on bulletin board displays and student work folders. In addition, the use of student work samples focus on the rigor of the tasks, and the level of questioning based on Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) hierarchy, thereby, strengthening teachers' best practices. For example, upper-grade teachers integrate supplemental articles from Attainment with the Ready Gen curriculum to increase opportunities for students to read and respond to informational text.
- Teachers adjust instructional practices to ensure student mastery in all subject areas. As a result of flexible scheduling, 100% of teachers participate in at least one of 24 teacher teams. During the 2014-2015 school year, 11% of students have moved to a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) through class placement, related services, or staffing ratio.