



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

I.S. 49 Berta A. Dreyfus

Middle School R049

**101 Warren Street
Staten Island
NY 10304**

Principal: James De Francesco

**Date of review: February 9, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

The School Context

I.S. 49 Berta A. Dreyfus is a middle school with 779 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 11% Asian, 35% Black, 41% Hispanic, and 12% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 35% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.4%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Developing
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	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders have structures in place to communicate and provide training to staff on high expectations. Staff consistently communicate and offer feedback on school-wide expectations to help families understand their child's progress toward them.

Impact

Systems of accountability for staff and feedback to families ensure that students are connected to a path of college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders use emails, *Daily Notes* and memoranda to share their expectations regarding the instructional focus on student ownership and access to rigorous tasks. Some of the *Daily Notes* state, "When developing lesson plans, be sure they are aligned with our instructional focus." They also provide reminders of professional development opportunities on the instructional focus. In addition, teachers reported that they are required to turn key and provide workshops of off-site trainings to staff. These workshops are reflected in the professional development plan.
- The professional development plan contains weekly workshops aligned with the instructional focus and other school goals. Sessions include "Concrete Ways to Incorporate Strategies and Concepts from Articles" and "Collaborative Strategic Reading". School leaders use observations to determine how teachers are meeting school goals and provide feedback to support them. One observation debrief shared next steps on grouping according to instructional objectives and evidence of student understanding. Another debrief shared feedback on using highlighters to differentiate instruction.
- Parents reported that emails, phone calls and online tools such as *iLearn*, provide them with information on how their child is performing in school. They shared that teachers offer suggestions such as websites, vocabulary flash cards and extra practice homework to help their child master skills at home. Curriculum night, target workshops on standards and testing as well as Parent-Teacher Association meetings offer information on the new learning expectations aligned with the standards. In addition, high school information meetings provide parents and students with information on the application process, how to prepare for specialized exams and overviews on the expectations for specific schools. Parents reported that speakers from various high schools visit and explain their specialties in detail. One parent felt this was important as her child wishes to focus on science and is interested in an advance track in this area.

Area of Focus

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

Although the majority of teachers participate in professional collaborations to analyze assessments and student work for groups of students, the use of the inquiry approach is developing across teams.

Impact

Professional collaborations do not yet result in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students and are in the process of meeting school goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in teams twice per month by grade-level academy and by discipline. Team meetings consist of teachers reviewing student work and assessment data for at risk students. Teachers report that these meetings consist of determining areas of improvement and strategies or methods to incorporate during upcoming lessons. However, documentation of these meetings only reflected some of these practices.
- During a grade 6 math meeting, the team reviewed midterm results for mid-level students whose tests results ranged from 55-64. Teachers shared that many of the students skipped questions which incorporated word problems. Some students who answered the word problems were able to include basic information to solve the problem, but did not use computation correctly. In addition, those students who answered the questions correctly did not explain their answer using math vocabulary or used it incorrectly such as the word reciprocal. The teachers decided to incorporate these test questions as part of the daily “Do Now” activity using different numbers. Other suggestions included having higher achievers write a new word problem for other students, and include more journal writing in math. One teacher suggested that they should try using the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) Protocol. However, a clear action plan for team next steps and follow-up were not discussed.
- A review of school documents and discussions with teachers reflected some evidence of teachers looking at student work. However, specific strategies to support target at risk students were not provided or discussed during teacher meetings. In addition, structures to track targeted students’ progress toward goals based on strategies discussed during meetings were not evident in team documents.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that curricula and academic tasks are Common Core-aligned, integrate the instructional shifts, and emphasize higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

Purposeful decision-making regarding curriculum development builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *Code X* for their English Language Arts (ELA) curricula. Previously, the school used *Connected Mathematics Program 3 (CMP3)* as their core math curricula, yet due to a lack of improvement in State test results and baseline scores from the beginning of the year, the school opted for the *GO Math!* program. *CMP3* and resources from *EngageNY* are currently used to supplement the *GO Math!* program. In addition, *The Full Option Science System (FOSS)* kits and the *Science Education for Public Understanding* program connect both State and Next Generation Science Standards. A review of curricula documents reflect learning objectives aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards.
- Unit and lesson plan tasks reflect an emphasis on citing textual evidence when supporting a claim. In a grade 8 social studies lesson plan, the task criteria required students to chart whether or not they believe a set of documents provides a positive or negative perspective of imperialism and cite textual evidence to support their position. In a grade 7 lesson plan, the task asked students to work in groups to read a news article on immigration, develop a pro or con claim on the topic and support with specific details from the text. In a grade 6 lesson plan, students have to read an article on effective listening and communicating and were asked to justify the meaning of difficult words not clearly defined, using evidence from text.
- In a grade 7 science lesson plan, the objectives state that students would develop a lab report to identify the parts of a mixture and conduct an experiment to determine the type of mixture they are given based on its properties. Students are required to develop a hypothesis based on their research of types of mixtures and understanding of chemical reactions, and form conclusions to confirm what their mystery mixture is. In a grade 6 self-contained ELA lesson plan, the task used questions such as, “How are tests helpful to students?” and “Do you agree with President Obama that students should spend more time learning rather than taking tests?” and students have to use evidence from the text to explain their perspective and rationales. Similarly, other unit and lesson plans reflect the same level of task prompts and questioning aligned to Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* level 3.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teacher practices include questioning and other scaffolds, but do not yet provide students with explicit multiple entry points or elicit high levels of thinking in student discussion and work products.

Impact

Teaching strategies result in uneven student engagement and demonstration of higher-order thinking in student discussions and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Several ELA classes used the CSR protocol in small groups where students choose their role to conduct a text-based discussion and focus on key vocabulary. In a grade 6 Integrated Co-Teaching class, students were in groups and took on different roles to participate in the CSR protocol. After reading an article on effective listening and communication, students determined which vocabulary words they found difficult and worked together to find context clues to assist them with their understanding of the article. The group “Gist” expert assisted the other students with paragraph summaries. In one group, students did not agree with the gist expert and instead, had to come to a group consensus of the summary. Although the use of the protocol was evident in the ELA classes, for the most part, the level of student responses aligned with thinking that reflected DOK Levels 1 and 2.
- In a grade 8 ELA class, some English Language Learners (ELLs) were grouped together and one newcomer student was helped with interpretation. The teacher prompted the students to define the word, “lack”. The teacher provided examples using the text details such as referring to the “lack of food”, “How were the sea lions feeling?” and even used other synonyms to help with the definition. The students attempted to involve the newcomer into the conversation through interpretation; however, a few times the student stated she did not understand and the students were unable to define it correctly for the student due to their level of difficulty with the task.
- In a social studies class, students were asked to work with a partner to develop a pro and con perspective on imperialism using several documents. Some students worked independently instead of working with a partner or group. Some student discussions were not aligned with the task objectives. Some students working on the task were unable to make connections between the documents and the concept of imperialism. Similarly in an ICT social studies lesson, students were grouped to determine the gists of paragraphs in an article. Some groups worked together on the task to provide responses such as “The gist for section 3 is that the new plan is too expensive for citizens and Texas would like to prohibit the bill.” Other groups were not on task and discussion was not geared to the learning objectives of the lesson.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers use rubrics, other assessments and grading polices aligned to the curricula, yet ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessment are inconsistent in their use to gauge student misunderstandings.

Impact

Due to limited feedback and inconsistent instructional adjustments, student learning needs are not met across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Across all content areas, rubrics are used to assess student work. Teachers use end of unit assessments and performance tasks to determine how students are performing on specific skills. In addition, the use of Common Core-aligned assessments from School Net provides teachers with student performance in ELA and math only. Although, aggregated reports are available to all staff members to determine progress toward learning objectives, evidence of student access to these scores for the purpose of determining next steps was not prevalent.
- Students are aware of how to use rubrics to determine their level of performance. During a meeting, students stated that Level 4 meant they were meeting the standards for the next grade level. In reviewing their work, students could identify their grade and areas of growth. However, teacher feedback to students provided little insight towards next steps in obtaining a higher grade. Sample feedback is several work products reflected, “Good job!” and “Great work” with no additional steps to take to improve the quality of the work product. Student responses on next steps based on their review of their work was, “Reread it over and over again,” “make inferences to add your opinion,” “Go over it again” and “read more at home”.
- Teachers were actively asking students open-ended questions to determine student level of understanding during tasks. However, in-the-moment adjustments were viewed only in some classes. In a grade 6 ICT ELA class, one teacher was conferring with a group of students by questioning and providing personal examples to help students understand the meaning of encouragement. The teacher read the sentence in parts, read the sentences before and after, used familiar vocabulary such as “continue” and guided students to think about the narrator’s actions and thoughts to define the word. By the end of the conference, the students defined the word correctly. However, in some classes, students were not provided with the level of support and instructional adjustments were not as thorough. In addition, self-assessments in the form of entry slips were only evident in ELA tasks in portfolios. Some entry slips shared why the writing made a good piece to share in the student portfolio such as “I was able to support my work with quotes and evidence from the story.” and “One thing I need to improve on is my spelling.” However, not all entry slips contained students’ reflections and complete descriptions.