



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

School of Leadership and Sustainability

Elementary School R062

**644 Bloomingdale Road
Staten Island
NY 10309**

Principal: Lisa Sarnicola

**Date of review: April 21, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

The School Context

School of Leadership and Sustainability is an elementary school with 75 students from pre-kindergarten through kindergarten. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 5% Asian, 0% Black, 5% Hispanic, and 89% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 20% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 is not available due to new school status.

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	Focus	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	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

The school leader consistently communicates high expectations to the entire staff, and provides training for those expectations. The school leader and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

The consistency with communicating high expectations has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations. The school leader and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The expectation is that the school provides a stimulating learning environment for every child and ensures that the individual learning needs of students are met through rigorous Common Core aligned curriculum. Expectations are communicated through newly formed mission and vision statements, a pre-summer meeting with staff, modeling for staff, school-wide Google Drive access, professional development workshops, weekly professional development plans, emails from the principal, and a staff handbook. Some of the topics the handbook addresses include the school's mission and vision statements, core values, school goals, preparation periods, interactive instruction, observation, planning, professional development, home contact, and student work which specifically states, "All staff members shall have high expectations for student work."
- Based on findings from observations, action plans are developed. Cycle 2 observation findings led to an action plan around the Danielson Domain 3d, specifically in English Language Arts (ELA). The plan included things such as, developing ELA Success Criteria by unpacking the standards, instructional rounds into colleague's classrooms, and allowing students to peer assess using the rubric/checklist. In addition, the school partners with Franklin Covey's Leader in Me model, where the "7 Habits of Effective People" are infused into the staff's every day routines. The set expectations have resulted in teachers holding each other accountable. Each teacher is responsible for leading a subject during team meetings ensuring all are held accountable. They implement each other's feedback presented on Google Drive, where all lessons, curricula, along with expectations and templates are loaded. One teacher stated, "I never want to disappoint my team."
- The staff's initial communication with families is a parent orientation which includes complimentary leveled reading books, word list, numbers chart, "Things You Can Do with Your Child at Home to Prepare Them" sheet, tips on how to hold a pencil, College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading, school calendar and a math sheet. The school also communicates with families via the school's website, monthly newsletters, parent handbook, progress reports, parent workshops such as, *The Leader in Me, Habit 1, Reading Strategies*. "Things to Work on with Your Child at Home" is sent as part of the student's progress report.
- The school also has a Parent Teacher Association, School Leadership Team and Learning Leaders trained parent volunteers. One parent said, "This is the closest thing you will get to a private school."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points, high quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the *Danielson Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, as well as by discussions at the team and school levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers lessons are differentiated to meet the needs of students while engaging students in Common Core aligned, intellectually challenging tasks. The *Danielson Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts were evidenced in all classes visited. For example, in a kindergarten class, students were drawing conclusions by using what they already knew and by using clues in a text. In another lesson, students used the mentor text to sketch and label the things animals do in their habitat and were writing words to match their pictures.
- In a pre-kindergarten lesson on counting, measurement and data, the students were sorting and graphing types of flowers. This was a lesson that was integrated with their plant unit of study. As a part of lesson, academic vocabulary was addressed with words such as “botanist.” The students had to explore and observe the three different flowers, sort the flowers, and place them on a graph provided to them. Students then had to determine which flower had the most, least, and the same number of petals. Students were observed performing tasks and answering questions asked of them such as, “If you have 7 baby breaths and 3 violets, how many do you have all together?” All students were engaged.
- During a math lesson, students were divided into three groups. While all groups were using mental math to solve a problem, each group had different problems. Group A worked in a teacher led group to solve a problem “5 is less than 7” using a continuum, after they’d organized their work. Group B worked independently on a problem, using measurement to solve a problem, and Group C was also teacher led, however their work was organized for them. They were then expected to solve the problem and explain. Additional differentiated methods included, leveled worksheets, visual supports, supporting vocabulary and sentence stems. Extensions were also provided to further challenge learners when they completed the task. For example, students were asked to complete a task where they took two objects from their table and measured them by comparing length, height, and/or weight.
- During the lesson on writing facts about animals, some students received scaffolding by being provided mentor texts to look for information, while others received assistance with tapping out words, that is, creating a pattern of sounds when reading by using one’s fingers to gently tap the desk. During the lesson on drawing conclusions students were given leveled books for the task. Examples of questions asked included, “How does a flower grow?” and “What is the job of the root?” During the kindergarten lesson on measuring an object, students were asked, if they put all their cookies together, how many would they have? “What did you do next? And why?” Although higher order questioning was present, more advanced students can continue to be pushed further to think critically.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school leader and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, resulting in coherence across grades and subject areas. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

The school's curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. All students demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The entire staff collaborated to unpack the standards at the grade level, the grade below and the grade above. This exposed teachers to standards at various levels and what the students were expected to do. Based on the findings, teachers created curricula maps, lesson plans, and criteria for determining student success. The teachers wrote the writing curriculum based on the Lucy Calkins *Unit of Study*. The staff used the Common Core Learning Standards and NY Scope and Sequence for science and social studies to design learning outcomes.
- Curricula documents reviewed showed a focus on the following instructional shifts: text-based evidence, academic vocabulary, deeper understanding of content and academic vocabulary. A kindergarten curriculum map plans for students to compose informative/explanatory texts in which they name what they are writing about and supply some information on the topic. It also expects students to confirm understanding of a text read aloud or information presented orally or through media by asking and answering questions about key details. A math-planning document expects students to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. Vocabulary words such as “compare,” “greater,” “less,” “more,” and “fewer” are also a part of the plan. A writing unit plan consists of 7 units that include topics such as narrative, informational, opinion, and persuasive writing.
- To emphasize higher order thinking, teachers plan with the use of Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* leveled questioning, and use a thinking chart for math based on Bloom's Taxonomy. Teachers also incorporate Tier II words such as “delicious,” “aware,” “gigantic,” “attention,” “shrink,” “blend” and “explore” into the curriculum. Essential questions are included in the design of lessons. For example, a writing unit, *Looking Closely: Observing, Labeling and Listing like Scientists*, asks, “How can we teach each other interesting and important information and ideas about a topic?” A curricula document for a Socratic seminar-style lesson on the topic of matter, was held leading to students answering questions such as: “What is a solid?”, “What is a gas?” and “What is a liquid?” They are also to answer “How are states of matter alike?”, “How are states of matter different?” and “How can matter change?”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, to track progress, to adjust curricula and to make instructional decisions. Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

All students demonstrate increased mastery. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs, and students are aware of their next learning steps

Supporting Evidence

- Along with a school-wide grading policy and rubrics, the teachers administer various forms of assessments in English Language Arts and mathematics, which include: benchmarks, pre-, mid- and post-assessments, on-demand writing, Measures of Student Learning, running records, and Degrees of Reading assessment to determine student progress. A two-problem math assessment is also administered to students after mini lessons. The results of the 2-problem assessment are used to determine student placement into a re-teach, on-level or enrichment group.
- Based on evidence provided, school wide assessment data for Degrees of Reading from the first test to the second, indicate more than 70% of the students in kindergarten, increased their reading by 4 or more levels, with the highest being a 9 level jump in reading level. Similarly in math, 77% of the students scored approximately 80% or higher on the *GO Math!* mid-year assessment. Of that amount, 40% are scoring 90% or higher. Extended response unit 9 assessment data shows that 95% of the kindergarten students scored 90% or better. Kindergarten pre-primer sight words data shows that 91% of the students are proficient. On-demand writing samples also indicate increases across the grade from pre- and post-assessments. Most kindergarten students came in as non-writers; in some cases, they were just able to draw a picture on the pre-assessment. However, students, as per post-assessment data, are now writing stories with proper word spacing, use of upper and lower case letters, and punctuation.
- Based on data, teachers conference with students to provide them feedback and make them aware of the next steps. Written feedback is also provided. For example, comments include: "Add more details and start to label using the ABC chart," "What sounds do you hear when you tap out the words?" and "Add more labels." Teachers next instructional moves included: having students tap out/stretch out words, doing word work around consonant-vowel-consonant words and short vowel sounds, and holding students more accountable for their next steps by leaving them with a sample/example that they can refer to. Self-assessment opinion writing checklists, student reflection sheets, and student friendly rubrics are also used. For example, one student's opinion writing checklist stated that he wrote his opinion in the beginning using sentence starters like "I feel," "I think," or "In my opinion," and he restated his opinion at the end by using sentence starters like "In conclusion," "As you can see," or "To sum it up."

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact

The teachers' structured professional collaborations have resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Teacher teams' analysis of data resulted in shared improvements in teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades, teacher teams meet and are engaged in inquiry based collaborative planning every Tuesday. The team structure allows for implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and opportunities to implement instructional strategies. A school-wide professional collaboration agenda indicated teachers engaged in the math Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional supports needed in order to meet the expectations of the standards.
- With the use of a collaborative assessment protocol, each team reflects on data revealed from the on-demand assessments. Teachers were observed looking at an on-demand piece for a unit in which a determination had to be made regarding what to put in place to support an above level student. The agenda included describing the student work, asking questions about the work, speculating about what the student is working on, hearing from the presenter and next steps which included providing mentor text, using facts to create a catchy introduction and text-based supports.
- Prior to the inquiry meeting, teacher team members complete a "patterns and trends" template based on student data. Information captured includes strengths identified, weaknesses identified, and other student learning needs that fall outside the trends identified.
- Teachers expressed that the teacher team structures have created a school-wide collegial support system. The teachers plan together, share best practices and collaboratively develop effective next steps. As a part of the data inquiry process, students' performance and progress within subgroups are tracked to help inform next steps. Students have shown increased stamina in their writing. Also, based on a review of a pre- and post-writing assessment-tracking document for a targeted group of students, approximately 80% of the students scored a level 1 on a unit 1 pretest. A unit 6 pretest indicates approximately 80% of the students are on or approaching a level 3. There are a total of 7 units. Three of these tests were still to be administered as of the date of the visit.