



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 65 The Academy of Innovative Learning

Elementary School R065

**98 Grant Street
Staten Island
NY 10301**

Principal: Sophie Scamardella

**Date of review: April 20, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

The School Context

P.S. 65 The Academy of Innovative Learning is an elementary school with 398 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 22% Black, 41% Hispanic, and 26% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 19% 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 95.0%.

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	Proficient
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	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training to support staff. Structures are effectively in place to provide families with information and feedback towards school-wide expectations.

Impact

A culture for learning has established mutual accountability with staff and successful partnerships with parents to support student progress towards high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations through emails which consist of reminding staff about the goals from last year and this year as part of feedback provided to teachers from observations and walkthroughs. One memoranda shared that teachers should not forget last year's goals when implementing instruction and should continue to hold students accountable for their learning by providing opportunities to ask questions, engage in discussions, expand on discussions and explain their thinking using evidence from the text. The same memorandum continues to remind staff members of this year's instructional foci on ensuring learning intentions are comprehensive and student awareness of what they are learning by establishing success criteria. "Success criteria should ensure students know what they need to do in order to be successful, in the event of confusion and how to improve." This message is carried across teacher teams, professional development and school-wide meetings.
- Teachers reported that the discussion of observational feedback was an essential component of the work in teams. During a meeting, teachers stated that the comments from observations are shared with one another and leads to improving instruction based on the instructional foci. One teacher stated, "We hold each other accountable because it is our job to implement new strategies discussed during meetings and share out our findings." Areas of focus have included improving questioning and discussion and increasing rigor. One teacher stated that she started using the Socratic seminar fishbowl method with her students to build strong discussions between them. Another method of peer feedback is through the staff blog where teachers share scenarios and obtain suggestions from their colleagues. Teachers stated they have posted scenarios and comments for other teachers, all of which have turned out to be helpful in providing expertise and training towards the instruction foci for the year.
- Parents reported that they are provided with grade-level curriculum conferences where teachers communicate the learning targets for year which provide them with insight on the expectations. June curriculum conferences provide information for parents on what to expect during the following year. Workshops are provided where parents can view actual lessons during the school day and learn certain strategies in order to reinforce them at home. One parent stated that she attended a *Foundations* workshop and now works with her son at home when he has difficulty with spelling or reading a words by asking him to "tap it out". Other parents reported that the workshops have also provided them with strategies to help their child with improving their writing skills. One parent reported that her child has improved due to these supports.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching strategies consist of scaffolds and questioning which serve as multiple entry points but do not provide high-quality supports and extensions and opportunities for students to take ownership in tasks.

Impact

Work products and discussions are in the process of reflecting full engagement and higher-order thinking skills across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 2 English Language Arts (ELA) class, students worked in ability-based groups to draw conclusions about characters and cite evidence from biographies to support their thinking. At-risk students worked with their teacher using one graphic organizer where students pulled evidence from the text to connect it with a trait while high achievers worked on another containing three columns requiring students to explain their thinking. In both groups students were able to complete the task correctly. However, in a kindergarten science class, student verbal responses were limited to short phrases with some basic inferences. In addition, all students were provided with the same task with no additional supports at their table to lift the skill level of their response.
- In a grade 4 social studies class, students were engaged in a debate presenting their viewpoint from a patriot or loyalist perspective on different events across the American Revolution. From the patriot's perspective, the students presented that taxes were unfair due to the fact that "the money goes to England and voting for which taxes to pay should be up to the people in the thirteen colonies." As a rebuttal, the students who spoke from the loyalist's perspective, stated, "The money was meant to pay for the army and their protection as well as to decrease debt accrued from the French and Indian War." They stated, "It's better to live in debt and be alive" All responses reflect interpretation and drawing conclusions using evidence from text. Whereas, in a grade 3/4/5 special education ELA-social studies class, students were using a Venn diagram to compare Andrew Cuomo and Peter Stuyvesant. Although students provided several details from a text on Peter Stuyvesant, many of the questions were asked by the teacher and most of the student responses were only facts on Peter Stuyvesant. Only some students were able to share responses in the form of inferences which aligned with *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* level 2.
- In a grade 5 ELA class, students were asked to choose a side, dystopia or utopia, and use details from the text, *The Giver*, to support their rationale on why Jonas' community, the main character, should be classified as utopia or dystopia. During the seminar, student presented their claims and either agreed or disagreed with one another. Although the discussion provided students with an opportunity to engage in student to student discourse, the level of responses varied in *DOK* levels which led to claims focused on opinion without much evidence or lack of a strong rationale to support their choices.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School staff utilizes curricula align to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards which integrate the instructional shifts and emphasize rigorous habits in tasks.

Impact

Curricula and tasks emphasize higher-ordering thinking to promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher-created curriculum maps and tasks align with the state and national standards. Teachers use a variety of resources from *New York City (NYC) Common Core Library*, *EngageNY*, *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* and mathematics strategies developed by Marilyn Burns to inform tasks and further align them to the expectations of the standards in ELA and math. In science and social studies, teachers align the pacing of the content to the NYC scope and sequence for each content area. Learning intentions are consistent with the language of the standards and are written in child friendly terms in the form of “I can” statements to use directly with students.
- All curriculum maps contain relevant Tier 2 and 3 academic vocabulary as it pertains to theme or topic of each unit. In a science map on a study of living things, plants and trees, the vocabulary reflects terms like life cycle, living and nonliving. In a grade 4 ELA-social studies lesson plan for students with disabilities, terms such as commerce, minimum wage and taxes are reflected. In addition, curricula maps and lesson plans contain information on deepening understanding using claims and supportive evidence. In a grade 4 persuasive writing plan, the learning intention entails the use of reasoning and evidence to support a claim in order to participate in a debate. Similarly, in a grade 5 ELA lesson plan, students are required to develop a claim and support it using evidence from a text to participate in a Socratic seminar.
- Tasks reflect questions and prompts at multiple *DOK* levels demonstrating a continuum of skills from basic inferring to developing and supporting a perspective. In a grade 5 math lesson plan on plotting ordered pairs on a coordinate plane, the guiding questions for a turn and talk discussion protocol included, “How are coordinates pertinent to your life?” and “Why do you think the military has used this system?” which aligns with *DOK* level 3. Similarly aligned *DOK* level 3 were the discussion questions in a grade 2 reading lesson plan which included, “What conclusions can you make about the text?” and “What evidence supports your conclusion?”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Ongoing assessment practices include the use of rubrics and performance tasks which are aligned to the curricula and serve as checks for understanding or tools for student self-assessment.

Impact

Effective adjustments and actionable feedback to teachers lead to increased rates in meeting student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics and checklists are aligned to the teacher-created curricula and Common Core Learning Standards or content standards. In addition, writing and content area performance tasks allow teachers to assess students across all subject areas. Using a Level 1 to 4 performance-based system, teachers provide students with grades aligned to these expectations. Through the review of assessments, teachers are able to gauge student understanding of target unit skills, especially vocabulary usage which is an area emphasized across all school-wide curricula. During a meeting, students were able to articulate clearly the difference between being provided a Level 1 versus a Level 4 piece of work.
- Students shared that they use success criteria as a self-assessment tool. One student stated that she used the criteria to determine whether she meet the criteria to be successful that day. The student reviewed the criteria, noticed she was missing quotes in her writing and went back to revise her piece. Another student shared that she used the criteria in the same way but revised her writing to include more details and add more periods to correct her punctuation errors.
- Teachers used one-to-one conferences to check for student understanding in classrooms. Questioning and prompting was evident during these conferences and via small group instruction. During a grade 5 math class, the teacher prompted students to determine a coordinate plane using the x- and y-axis and why one quadrant turned the integers positive or negative while explaining how they are relevant. Some students demonstrated difficulty in their responses. Through teacher prompting and peer input, the students were able to determine the accurate answers. In addition, using a large, classroom size grid, the teacher asked students to determine whether they were in the correct spots based on given information. Students were able to consider the teacher's prompt and correct themselves.
- Student feedback is provided verbally and in writing to help students gauge areas to work on in a unit of study. Feedback is provided in the form of glow and grows. Students felt their teachers' input was helpful in meeting grade-wide expectations. One student shared that he needs to work on his spelling and now taps out words and refers to the book when he is writing. Another student shared that he needs to work on adding more quotes based on his teacher's comments and said he rereads his work to make sure he has included them, as well as to correct any spelling errors.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote school goals and the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership structures are in place where teachers are able to voice their input on student learning.

Impact

The use of teacher teams strengthen the instructional and leadership capacity of teachers leading to the deepening of teacher practices and meeting students' needs across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly to review student data and work and discuss gaps in student understanding to determine which teaching strategies would work best in order to improve their progress. Upper grade teachers reported that after a review of state testing data and other baselines, students had difficulty with writing short and extended responses. Teacher observation served as a point of data as well, since students were responding to questions at low *DOK* levels during classroom discussions. To respond to the needs of students, teachers decided to review their questions and prompts and further aligned them to *DOK* 3 and 4 levels. Additionally, they work on modeling how to formulate questions using the *DOK* verb chart and added more opportunities for accountable talk between students in class. Teachers report that students are increasingly using more advanced vocabulary in their writing and their questions are reflecting higher *DOK* levels.
- A vertical group of early childhood teachers met to discuss the work of a grade 2 student who was considered at risk, as the rate of improvement in writing was minimal. The teachers reviewed the student work for trends in areas which appeared as gaps in learning and provided several strategies including revisiting the editing process, adding more visuals to the success criteria, and providing a strategy for paraphrasing and using videos. The presenting teacher felt that paraphrasing was the priority skill to be addressed and chose to work on this area and report her findings during the next meeting.
- Team leaders meet with the administration regularly to discuss issues that arise from teacher teams. Both the early childhood and upper grade team leaders have shared their concerns regarding implementation of new information units of study. Both teams felt that in order for students to participate fully in the units, more multi-level texts need to be purchased to support at-risk students. In addition, after a professional training, teachers felt that more manipulative box kits were needed to provide access and hands-on learning to all the students in the class. Both instructional concerns were discussed with the administration which led to the purchasing of new materials across the school.