



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. R373

Elementary – Middle School R373

**91 Henderson Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10301**

Principal: Paulette Benevento

Date of review: December 8-9, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Audrey Madison

The School Context

P.S. R373 is an elementary-middle school with 502 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade eight. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 4% Asian, 28% Black, 32% Hispanic, and 32% White students. The student body includes 11% English Language Learners and 99% students with disabilities. Boys account for 76% of the students enrolled and girls account for 24%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 89.9%.

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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty strategically integrate the instructional shifts and ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

All students, including lowest and highest- achieving students, are cognitively engaged in rigorous tasks and have access to coherent curricula that promotes college and career readiness for a variety of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers of students who participate in New York State Alternate Assessments previously followed a curriculum which focused on teaching letter shapes. These teachers are now following the *First Author Writing Curriculum*, which aligns to Common Core Learning Standards at student ability levels. Lesson plans reflect instruction that teaches students to think of themselves as authors, choose topics to write about, and use a combination of drawing, dictation, forming their own letters as parts of words and sentences as progressive steps to communicate their thoughts. Writing materials identified in lesson plans, such as alphabet boards, letter tiles, keyboards, a variety of lined writing paper, and *First Author* software, offer access to independent writing tasks for students with disabilities across various ability levels.
- The current instructional focus is assessment in writing for staff and students. *Strategies for Writers*, a common core aligned program is applied for students in grades 2- 4 who participate in standardized New York State English Language Arts (NYSELA) exams. This program was chosen by school leaders to strengthen teacher and student assessment of writing as it utilizes common core- aligned rubrics and checklists.
- Standardized English language Arts (ELA) curriculum maps focus on the *Treasures* curricula, with the addition of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to provide access to all students. Lesson plans also reflect grouping and differentiated activities such as: use picture and word support, sentence starters, verbal and gestural prompting, use of manipulatives. Lesson plans clearly reflect the facilitation roles of teachers and paraprofessionals. For teachers of alternate assessment students, curriculum documents, including lesson plans reveal students are grouped according to levels determined by data from the Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI).
- Teachers devised and use a lesson plan template aligned to effective practices of Designing Coherent Instruction. All lesson plans, from teachers of students who are standardized or alternately assessed, reflect student friendly learning targets such as, I can pick a topic to write about, I can identify main idea and supporting details of the text 'The Northeast,' I can use properties to multiply by 7, I can discover foods found in gardens and grocery stores that promote personal health.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

All teachers use and create common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's standards-based curricula in order to create a clear picture of individual student progress towards goals and makes curricular adjustments. However, analysis of aggregated student outcomes limits refined planning and goal setting across the school.

Impact

While the assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding individual student achievement, the narrow focus on individualized data invites missed opportunities to recognize trends across classrooms, student populations and sites which impacts instructional and organizational adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- When asked how he knows if he is learning, one third grade standardized assessment student immediately indicated his teacher's written feedback, "Next time try to group your thoughts into sentences." An alternatively assessed student stated, "There's a rubric we use," then articulated the components of his Student Class Rubric to convey what he had done well. His criterion assesses: Did I learn something? Does it make sense? Written feedback to a fourth grader indicated, "Next time, add words like first, then, finally to help the reader follow your story from beginning to end." A narrative writing checklist informed a student he had "not yet showed why characters did what they did by including their thinking."
- The Checklist Based on Common Core Learning Standards is used across the school to develop and evaluate modified promotional criteria for each student. Data analysis provides the percentage of standards met, and is used to make promotional decisions for each student. School leaders and staff monitor baseline, midyear and end of year data to track progress toward promotional decisions for students by class. The School Comprehensive Education Plan outlines the percentage of students on each grade at mastery level in writing, yet no specific standards were identified.
- Student achievement in reading is tracked as indicated in the end of year *Fountas and Pinnell* analysis. Progress is measured by increase in reading levels, for individual students by class. The analysis demonstrates student progress between baseline and mid-year; mid-year and end-year. The class by class data offers a picture of individual increased mastery of at least one Lexile level for a majority of students tracked over time. Yet cumulative data by class, student populations, or sites, is not readily available.
- Another school-wide common practice is monitoring the progress of students who are alternatively assessed using Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) in writing, math, reading, and communication. Tracking sheets reflect that individual student scores are recorded by class with fall baselines, and spring progress monitoring. Teachers of alternatively assessed students were observed in discussion of instructional strategies based on SANDI writing results, such as extending the use of entry-level sentence starters and student application of words from current units of study to maintain support yet decrease student dependency on teachers.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across a vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies (including questioning, scaffolds and routines) strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact

Across ability levels, the needs of all learners are met so that students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and discussions and produce meaningful work products that push them towards their learning targets and goals.

Supporting Evidence

- After a social studies class read about Niagara Falls together, a student requested to look up more information about the Rainbow Bridge on the computer. Allowance for this extension into the curriculum prompted the student to write more and say, "I would like to ride my bicycle across this bridge." In another class, students were observed working together to solve multiplication problems using the distributive property in a third grade math class. One student noticed that a member of his group had mixed up the multiplication and addition operations. After an art class lesson on enlarging their drafts, students excitedly shared that their art work will be used as props in the upcoming school play and were created as they learned to go "from small to big."
- In one class, some students used *Picture Exchange Communication System* (PECS) boards to read text then point to or say answers to teacher- posed "wh" questions. The PECS matched the story and questions that were projected on an interactive white board and provided picture clues to support students understanding of the text and questions. Other students were observed reading identical text, without pictorial support, but with multiple-choice options for responses.
- In one science technology class, a paraprofessional joined in to encourage students to physically exercise as they learned from an interactive video about healthy eating. In a third grade class of standardized assessed students, the paraprofessional facilitated group work to compare and contrast two versions of Cinderella. In a kindergarten class of alternatively assessed students, students used letter tiles to write high frequency words with the assistance of a paraprofessional. A non- verbal student responded to a question using a yes/ no communication device, with prompting from her paraprofessional.
- Across all classrooms, differentiation consistently provides multiple entry points through utilization of multi- level and multi- font size text, visuals such as pictures and symbols, gesturing, and wipe boards. In a *First Author's* lesson, the teacher presented images representing food and winter, on an interactive white board, stating, "We have to vote on what to write about." After a three to one vote, students were observed brainstorming what they know about winter.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff systematically communicate high expectations for all students and effectively partner with families to support their children’s progress through clear, focused feedback, guiding support and collaboration.

Impact

Parents actively support students, including high needs subgroups, as they make continual progress, and as appropriate transition to Least Restrictive Environments as they reach higher levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Interviewed parents articulated flowing conversation and collaboration with teachers, related service providers, and assistant principals about their children’s achievement. One parent stated, “They openly accept my ideas for helping my child.” Another parent expressed that her child’s testing classification was swiftly adjusted from alternatively assessed to standardized assessment because the teacher’s ongoing assessments and communications with the family led to a re-evaluation. One more parent shared that her child initially had a hard time adjusting to school. “The teacher and I met because my son’s IEP was weak. Together we agreed IEP goals needed to be adjusted. He is now happier going to school and has moved beyond his original IEP goals.” An additional parent indicated she reads with her child and checks homework to know what he is learning. A point system incentive that includes homework supports another parent to ensure her child completes it.
- Notebooks provide means for interactive conversations between teachers and families. Individualized Daily Point Sheets support monitoring of targeted behaviors throughout the day and allow for parent and teacher comments. For nonverbal students, actual pictures of students doing well are used on a point chart to inform students and parents about progress toward behavioral goals. Parents agreed that teacher phone calls, emails and notes keep them consistently aware of academic progress and behavior. The parent handbook offers information regarding support organizations for families of children with special needs.
- Parents of children in high needs subgroups receive guidance and support to ensure students are prepared for next levels. Parents expressed gratification and surprise that “the gap between the Common Core Learning Standards and our children is decreased, as our children learn to communicate and to write and to exceed our expectations.” For example, because of assisted daily living instruction, one child mixed ingredients at home to bake cookies with her parent, “and tapped me on my shoulder and said, ‘It’s your turn’.” Another parent sees increased levels of citizenship as her child with speech delays now engages in typical conversation in social situations as he introduces himself by name and asks, “How are you doing?” Parents concurred as one parent expressed, “373 has been life changing for us and our children.”
- One fifth grade student eagerly anticipates going to a neighborhood middle school because he is passing his grades and has improved his behavior. A fourth grade student is now part of the student council because the guidance counselor noticed his improved behavior, especially regarding listening in class, examined his portfolio and asked him to join.

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 instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards including the instructional shifts. Distributed leadership structures are embedded across the school.

Impact

School- wide instructional coherence promotes increased student achievement for all learners. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The *First Authors* teacher team is comprised of pedagogues across sites engaged in inquiry which promotes implementation of a new curriculum for students who are alternatively assessed. Thus far, the *First Author's* rubric has broadened teachers' knowledge and understanding of various levels of writing. Teachers are more cognizant that letter correspondence and drawings are valid ways for students of varying cognitive abilities to communicate their intent. "The curriculum has offered more opportunities to challenge our students and helped us raise levels of rigor." As teachers discuss their inquiry students from low, mid and high end of writing performance according to SANDI data, they indicate increased student achievement, "Higher- end students are now writing about their experiences and adding more details." Teachers more purposefully measure incremental growth such as, "In September he was not able to hold a pen but now he has consistently written I am statements. That was four levels of growth." Teachers are posed to revise their school goal because, "Students are improving by leaps and bounds so we'll have no problem increasing student writing skills by 10%."
- During their meeting, teacher team members recorded next steps: "To align SANDI writing skills checklist with *First Author* key skills and Developmental Writing Skills checklist; share data and strategies with related service providers, cluster teachers and parents to support cohesive student improvement in writing." One teacher stated she is "wondering about methods to transfer strategies from the *First Author's* program to shift student learning from personal writing to specific common core writing targets such as opinion and informational writing.
- In response to a District 75 initiative to strengthen the quality of Individualized Education Plans, the IEP Team, which includes four classroom teachers out of six team members, is using district created rubrics across sites to evaluate IEPs. The team has determined the need for improvement in the areas of management needs, parents section, and academic/ social/ physical growth. Across sites, classroom teachers view the IEP team members as mentors and as a resource. After team members turn-keyed District training, more specific Present Levels of Performance were noted in the focused areas of student IEPs thus impacting instruction and student learning.
- The data specialist provided full day *Thinking Maps* training for thirteen colleagues, teachers of alternately assessed students across sites and grades, as a result of last year's inquiry team work with Thinking Maps. District 75 had noted gains in this school's student use of graphic organizers by students who took the standardized ELA exams.