



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 3 Raul Julia Micro Society

Elementary - Middle School X003

**2100 Lafontaine Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Denise Brown

**Date of review: February 5, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

P.S. 3 Raul Julia Micro Society is an elementary - middle school with 340 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 29% Black, 68% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 20% students with disabilities. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.9%.

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	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Distributive leadership structures afford teachers and teacher teams the opportunity to make key decisions about teaching and learning through the systematic analysis and revision of curriculum and student work products.

Impact

The work, frequency, and variation of teacher teams provide all teachers with opportunities to engage in shared leadership and professional collaborations resulting in improved teacher capacity and mastery of student goals for groups of students across the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers stated that they share best practices and support each other's growth. The teachers meet in grade, literacy, and math teams. In the literacy team, or professional learning community (PLC), teachers explained, "We co-create a lesson on Tuesdays and then on Friday, typically first period, one teacher volunteers to teach it and we all observe. Then on the following Monday we give cool and warm feedback and the remaining teachers revise the lesson to meet their students' needs and then teach it. The following meeting we look at student work using a protocol and then begin this cycle anew." Teachers agreed that this cycle helps support coherent lesson design, development, and delivery. A new teacher stated that, "I get warm and cool feedback from teachers of various grade levels, gain insight as to how my colleagues are seeing how I teach this lesson, and see my own progress. I also have the opportunity to observe and learn from watching how they teach a lesson. It's the best professional development." Additionally, teachers collaboratively work vertically and horizontally to share best practices in a collegial and trusting environment built for learning. Teachers stated that, "By reviewing the curricula vertically we can go backwards from grade 4 to kindergarten and find where we can ensure students are proficient in the use of number lines, otherwise it will be a problem in grade 4."
- The cycle of inquiry for grade teams provides a venue for teachers to determine next steps based on looking at student work and data. For example, currently teachers just completed their second cycle of inquiry, which has spanned a month. The math team from kindergarten through grade 4 determined a learning trajectory for critical areas for math within these grades. In the literacy team for grade 3 through 8, it determined an argumentative essay rubric, and tailored another version in "kid-friendly language" defining terms in parenthesis so that all students would be able to use it across grades. Teachers stated that their practice has become more coherent as an outcome of the work in teacher teams and as an example, they pointed to the current writing unit of argumentative essay. Teachers stated that this lesson study work has supported their personal practice and increased student mastery. A vast majority of teachers agreed that the inquiry is beneficial. They added that it led to providing groups of students with differentiations, in addition to the 'kid-friendly' rubric to support their writing as well as expanding students' explanations.
- Instructional leaders facilitate each teacher team meeting. Instructional coaches and consultants also support teacher teams and together they collaborate towards increasing student achievement. Teacher leaders' roles include collaboratively creating agendas, facilitating meetings as needed, and delegating next steps. Teachers' key decisions about curricula and instruction are based on students' needs and collegial feedback.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Classroom practices reflect the use of instructional strategies. However, strategic scaffolds and high quality multiple entry points into the curricula vary across subject areas, particularly for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, and provide few opportunities for student ownership in discussions.

Impact

Some students are not challenged to work to their full potential thereby limiting opportunities for them to engage in academic tasks that further promote higher-order thinking skills and ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and staff believe that students learn best when "they are engaged in challenging academic work that is aligned to the standards and is evident when virtually all students are intellectually engaged in the content through well-designed learning tasks and activities requiring complex thinking and foster rich discussions amongst students". Across classes, students worked in small differentiated groups and demonstrated discussions.
- Across classrooms students were provided multiple entry points into the lessons being taught. In a self-contained middle school math class, during a gallery walk, students worked in pairs to answer real-world math problems, and then selected their favorite problem to demonstrate to the class in a presentation. This process provided students with the opportunity to think, speak, and problem-solve together, and have choice before presenting them to the teacher. Then students worked in groups with fraction tiles, white board slates, and each teacher worked with a small group. Similarly, in a grade 2 class students knew strategies for close reading and in data-determined groups worked to find inferences in leveled texts.
- Student discussion is built into the lessons. Some discussions included a majority of students, yet some discussions 'ping-ponged' from one student to the teacher and back out to another student, precluding students from responding directly to each other as the school wide goal states. Although the goal is for students to respond to each other from open-ended questions, often with discussion protocols to decrease the amount of teacher-talk so students own their learning, this is not yet being demonstrated in the vast majority of classes. In a grade 4 class, students finished writing argumentative essays and were to peer edit using a rubric. The teacher reviewed the methods of peer editing and using a feedback form, asking closed questions in a ping-pong manner, leaving some students out of the discussion. This occurred without noting that a few students were not yet ready to participate. Similarly in a grade 3/4 math lesson, the teacher worked whole class to demonstrate using real-world manipulatives to help students understand fractions on a number line. Yet although the students were ready to begin as was evidenced by students' responses, the teacher continued with another example. Similarly, in a grade 7/8 science class, students worked in groups to research answers to questions about viruses, however some students were disengaged or unsure of where to find answers. Then students presented to the class but without a purpose for the listeners in the audience. Likewise in a grade 8 social studies class although students watched a video, and had different articles, the intended discussion was in a ping-pong fashion from teacher to students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Collaborative planning builds coherence and alignment of the curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards while emphasizing challenging tasks that encourage higher-order thinking for all learners.

Impact

All students benefit through access to engaging and rigorous tasks across content areas, preparing them for college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and teachers plan curricula to make purposeful decisions to support college and career readiness for all students. Two years ago the school made a data-based decision to revamp the organization of the school and departmentalized grades 3 and 4 in all core content areas to coincide with grades 5 through 8. To that end, the school has adopted *Expeditionary Learning* for grades 3 to 8 and *Journeys* for kindergarten through grade 2. This purposeful decision provides all with coherent curriculum across the school.
- For math, the school has adopted *GO Math!* for kindergarten through grade 2 and *Connected Math Project 3* (CMP3) for grades 3 to 8. However, teachers determined that *CMP3* was not meeting the needs of students so they began supplementing with *iReady*. Then after a year of using the combination of curricula, teachers determined a change to using *GO Math!* for all grades kindergarten to 8 would be best for their students as it provides them with a coherence in vocabulary, terms, and the implementation of the instructional shifts found in the Common Core. Math lesson planning follows the *GO Math!* format, including but not limited to learning outcomes, essential questions, vocabulary, daily routines, problem of the day, engage, explore, explain, elaborate, evaluate, response to intervention (RTI), and problem solving. The RTI section is for differentiation so that all students have access to the curricula and can demonstrate their thinking. A yearlong curriculum map overview provides each grade the critical areas, chapters, clusters, domains, and timeframe. Daily curricula and unit plans in math demonstrate the instructional shifts, thus providing students with real world application problems for math across grades. Teachers, consultants, and coaches determine anchor, instructional, and procedural charts for math, supporting students in their use of tools and in being independent learners.
- The school implements the *New York City Social Studies* and *Science Scope and Sequence* content standards. Lesson plans include an agreed upon set of components not limited to teaching point, Common Core or content standards, connection, teaching, guided practice, link, independent practice, differentiated instruction, share, assessment, and homework. Since the school has a large population of students with disabilities and ELLs, the lessons are planned to provide access for all learners, including pre-planned data-based grouping.
- The writing units for grades 3 to 8 have been planned yearlong for all grades using a common calendar of scope and sequence. Currently the focus is on argumentative writing. The staff developed a student-friendly rubric and graphic organizers. Additionally, teachers have unit plans and modules that include overview, essential questions, and key ideas. Writers' workshops also include units of study with monthly calendars and "I can" teaching points, also developed by teachers with the support of consultants and administration.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school, common assessments are utilized to identify student progress and adjust instruction. Teachers use school-wide rubrics to provide feedback to students with next steps.

Impact

Teachers are grouping students based on learning needs and assessment data, and provide students with relevant feedback to increase their achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use, develop, and adapt Common Core aligned rubrics/checklists and pre- and post-unit tests, to measure student progress across grades and subject areas. One of these includes the argumentative writing rubric. A review of student work reveals that students use checklists and rubrics to self-assess. Students explained that they understand how to use a rubric and stated that they use it to help assess themselves. One student said, and others agreed, “We can figure out how to improve our writing, research, or argumentative essays and make them better. I always grade myself and look at a level 3 or 4 [criteria], and if my project is a 3 then I look at the 4 to see if I have everything on a 4 [criteria] and if not, then I revise to make sure I have added in the 4 [criteria].” Students were able to demonstrate the feedback they had received on projects. Most students could explain the teachers’ feedback and the suggested next steps.
- Common assessments are used across the school using the chapter and unit tests within the Common Core-aligned curricula. Additionally, *Fountas and Pinnell* Running Records are administered three times a year to track student progress in reading. Teachers compare students’ reading Lexile gains by class, while administration tracks growth by grade and class. The school administers three to four ‘test simulations’ in grades 3 to 8 to provide a mock assessment to monitor student progress toward school-wide goals.
- Students have goals that include both long-term and short-term incremental goals. Most students can name the long-term goals of “never give up” and “perfect attendance”, while some students named the current short-term goal of “increasing their reading score by one level”.

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 relevant training. Expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness are communicated by staff and school leaders as they partner with parents.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability to support student progress toward attaining high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers stated that they consistently communicate to families regarding their children’s progress toward expectations. Communications include phone calls, emails, texts, backpacked letters, grade-team newsletters, and notifications through *Engrade*. Parents shared that they are able to contact teachers directly through *Engrade*, an online grade program. Students stated that they have received direct responses from teachers to support them in completing homework or projects. Some teachers also use *Class Dojo* and parents stated that they receive emails and messages from teachers regarding their children’s work, which is often scanned and attached to the message. Additionally, parents stated they partner with staff as they support their children’s academic growth. For example, parents stated that they make appointments with teachers to learn how to support their children with the new concepts in math and as a result of their meetings were empowered to support their children at home. Some students stated that they look at *Engrade* with their parents to discuss their progress and assignments to be completed. Volunteer grandparents also support classrooms, students, and teachers. Further, parents also stated that they make an appointment to see the teachers or stop by on Tuesdays, or visit for a few minutes when picking up their child after school, as the teachers always make time for them, for which they stated they are grateful for this partnership.
- Parents discussed the workshops that they have attended to support their understanding of the high school application process. Students also spoke about receiving the high school selection book at the end of seventh grade and workshops with the counselor and teachers to help them narrow their selections. Parents and students discussed attending high school tours and fairs and shared how helpful these were in their determining which high school to attend based on their career goals. These workshops supported the selection process and completion of the application. A few students also discussed preparation for the special high school assessment to help them meet their personal goals of attending specialized schools, to which they are awaiting notification.
- The administration provides consistent communications to all staff through a multitude of measures including bulletins, staff handbook, and professional development, and common planning time. Teachers agreed, when a veteran teacher stated, “that by collaborating on co-creating and planning a lesson and then observing it implemented by a volunteer, and then give cool and warm feedback, has created a level of trust for each of us to learn and to hold each other accountable [for these high expectations].” School leaders support staff’s implementation of these expectations through a consistent cycle of observations and actionable feedback, which then informs the professional development plan. Teachers, teacher leaders, and consultants create and present the professional development.