Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 023 The New Children's School

Elementary School X023

2151 Washington Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Shirley Torres

Date of review: November 17, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich

The School Context

P.S. 023 The New Children's School is an elementary school with 554 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 37% Black, 62% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 14% English Language Learners and 27% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.4%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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 Framework for Teaching, 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		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Proficient**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Proficient**

Area of Celebration

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

Findings
Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact
These collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers and typically resulting in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Distributed leadership is evident in that each teacher team has a team leader who has been trained and facilitates each grade team meeting. Teachers use a protocol for looking at student work and use the information to determine next steps in their teaching and supporting student needs. They analyze the gaps in learning by grade level and determine the standards on which to focus and group students accordingly. One teacher team is called the Building Capacity Team, where the teacher leaders from each grade level, the math and literacy coaches, and data specialist, meet vertically and then turnkey the next pedagogical steps to their respective grade team members. They determined the focus standards based on the gaps from the New York State (NYS) math and English language arts (ELA) assessments to determine the schoolwide yearly focus standards.

- Teachers spoke about how analyzing assessment data and student work has improved their instructional practice. One teacher stated that when others have shared best practices for use in classes for special education or English as a Second Language classes, she has "found those strategies and instructional techniques useful in another way such as developing my groupings of students and teaching in small groups and it has helped me to improve as a teacher". Others concurred about their own growth as they too have adopted shared strategies. Additionally teachers spoke to the improvement they have seen in groups of students. The pre-kindergarten teachers met with the kindergarten teachers during a vertical team meeting and shared that one of the areas they wanted students to know and be able to do upon entering kindergarten is to write their names. To that end, the pre-kindergarten teachers are able to demonstrate student achievement of this skill from the beginning of this school year to the review date. Similarly, teachers of the Academic Intervention Services (AIS) class, for students who are struggling in reading as measured at 1.80-1.99, focus on improving the students' growth on the New York State ELA assessment. Through gap analysis of student work and data during team meetings and reteaching certain standards, teachers were able to highlight growth in student achievement from last year with approximately 70% and 89% of grade 5 and 4 students respectively, meeting standards on the NYS ELA assessment.

- On Mondays, teachers and para-professionals attend professional learnings, designed and delivered by teachers, coaches and administration. These professional learning cycles, in conjunction with the instructional focus teams, alternate between focusing on aligning the Common Core social studies and science content to reading tasks and using the item analysis from common assessments to determine next instructional steps.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and the school's articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
The school's alignment of pedagogy to the curricula and the engagement of all students, including high performers, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities, in challenging tasks, is not yet evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and staff believe that students learn best when "in small groups where teachers ask higher-order questions to prompt student conversations so they can 'feed off each other's ideas' that demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, with the teacher moving from group-to-group giving feedback and tracking student responses". Across classes, students worked in small groups and demonstrated accountable talk in their discussions.

- Across classrooms students were provided multiple entry points into the lessons being taught. In a second grade class, students sat on the rug with whiteboard slates writing their answers to the teacher's questions, sharing their answers with a partner, discussing answers, and having the opportunity to make changes, and then showing the boards to the teacher. This process provided students with the opportunity to think, write, speak, and share their answers before presenting them to the teacher. Similarly in a fourth grade math lesson, students working in small groups on leveled tasks based on the previous day's data, self-selected a method to solve problems. The teacher worked with a group of students, and then while they were using whiteboard slates to solve problems, she checked on the groups asking clarifying and probing questions. To summarize the lesson, the teacher had students line up along a wall and "took them for a pretend tour of the classroom in a boat" to mirror one of the problems all students solved. Then when there was one student "left-over" she asked a question that mirrored the aim, and all students chorally responded the answer, demonstrating understanding.

- Across classes students' work products and discussions demonstrated higher-order thinking, yet some high achievers and early finishers were left without next steps. For example, in a second grade class, students have been writing their own books, incorporating sequential order terms, details, and specific components of a story, all listed in the rubric and checklist. The teacher had a student volunteer read the teacher's book aloud, then pairs graded her book using the rubric. Some students were able to reread the teacher's story without a scaffold and moved onto the next part, finishing early. Whereas some students required support to reread the book before completing the task. Similarly in a fifth grade ICT class, students were introduced to a book about the *Titanic* for a social studies lesson to help them write their own informational text. Using an audio book, the teachers played the introduction, stopping when students posed questions, prompting a whole class discussion. While most of the students were engaged using accountable talk, agreeing, disagreeing, and 'piggy-backing off each other's comments as per school focus, a few students asked or answered more questions, while a few others remained disengaged.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

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

- Each lesson plan includes an agreed upon set of components containing but not limited to the essential question, aim, educational outcome, Common Core Learning Standards, teach, active engagement, flexible groups, multiple pathways, and assessment. Since the school population includes a large population of students with disabilities and English Language Learners, the lessons provide access for all learners as well as for flexible grouping.

- As questioning and discussion are areas of foci school wide, lessons provide time for students to demonstrate their thought-process through discussion around higher-order thinking questions. Most lessons include pre-determined questions that spiral upwards using the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels from DOK 1 to DOK 3 or 4. In a second grade lesson plan for a writing workshop, the essential questions included, “How can we elaborate or add important details to our story? How can we describe using more interesting and creative words?” In a third grade lesson plan questions begin at DOK 1 with “What is a mixture?”, “What is a solution?” and spiral up to DOK 3 “How can she determine the mass of the snack if she doesn’t have a tool to measure it? Explain.”

- The integration of science and social studies content-based units of study into English Language Arts curricula engenders instructional coherence. The school implements the New York City Department of Education Social Studies Scope and Sequence content standards into reading and writing performance tasks. For example a fourth grade science lesson incorporates a reciprocal teaching strategy for students to read science articles using a cooperative group activity defining student roles as the questioner, predictor, clarifier, and summarizer. The plan includes multiple pathways for student learning through grouping, prompts, and leveled articles to provide productive struggle and extensions. Additionally, staff and administration created a curriculum-pacing calendar aligned by grade level and unit of study, for the implementation of New York City Scope and Sequence for science using the Harcourt *Science* textbook. Teachers stated that collaboratively creating this planning guide has supported their implementation of the science curriculum.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments that measure students' progress of acquired skills aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, rubrics, and a common grading policy aligned to the school's curricula.

Impact
The school analyzes assessment results to adjust instruction and curricula to meet student-learning needs. Common assessments provide a common lens and language to discuss student progress and inform instructional adjustments to advance student achievement, and teachers provide actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have aligned assessments to the curricula and created or aligned rubrics to support the determination of student achievement. Students use the rubrics or checklists in revising their work or "to make sure that I do everything on the checklist to get the highest grade", and "The rubric helps us to make sure we did everything." Students also stated that they use the rubrics "to grade ourselves and then [the teacher] gives us her rubric grade and she compares it". Therefore, students learn how to use rubrics and checklists to help determine completion and ratings.

- Teachers provide students with feedback on their work and post it on bulletin boards both inside and outside the classrooms. The actionable feedback that is rooted in the rubric language, is attached to the rubric with ratings, and includes "glows" and "grows" as areas that are highlights and areas to improve, respectively. Students are able to explain their next step for ensuing assignments according to the teacher's feedback. Student notebooks and folders show student work and most demonstrate teacher responses in checkmarks, actionable feedback, and some with statements or stickers of encouragement.

- Teachers use common formative and summative assessments and analysis of data to determine student progress toward goals. A data cycle that is consistent across classrooms, includes teaching a lesson, analyzing student work for mastery and areas of need, reteaching and regrouping according to student need, and then reassessing. For example, two teachers from a third grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class introduced a "traffic light format" for creating informational paragraphs, whereby students labeled types of sentences red, green, or yellow, to denote topic sentence, details, and closing sentence accordingly. The students had a mentor text as a model and used a web graphic organizer to label the sentences then used colored sentence strips to write their own paragraphs. Teachers conferenced with students about their work, and then analyzed the student work to determine regrouping students by skills needed and retaught the lesson differently for some students using a web graphic organizer or a "boxes and bullets" graphic organizer. The results show that students' paragraphs improved, with some showing mastery of certain skills.

- Students have goals that include both broad-stroke long-term and short-term incremental goals. Although most students can name the broad stroke goals of "never give up" and "perfect attendance", while some students named the current short-term goals of "increasing reading score by one level".

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
High expectations connected to professional and instructional goals, as aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, are consistently communicated to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff consistently communicate high expectations to students.

Impact
Structures, that provide training and foster the existing culture of accountability, support the school's high expectations for teaching. Ongoing and detailed feedback provides support toward next level preparedness and learning amongst students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through multiple ways including bulletins, professional learning, non-negotiables, and feedback from classroom observations. The administration sets out non-negotiables at the beginning of the year that are rooted in the data-based goals for the school year. The math non-negotiables and a checklist for literacy include but are not limited to, “designating current strategy and anchor charts in the classroom”, “crafting lesson plans inclusive of evidence of multiple entry points for various ability levels”, “conference notes for each student”, “leveled library”, “ongoing read-alouds displayed, planned, and tied to social studies”, “evidence of flexible small groups, accountable talk, and partner lists”, “daily math aim clearly visible in student friendly language, using “I can” statements”, and “evidence of Common Core instructional shifts currently in progress”. These expectations are not just checklists but are evident throughout the school. Students used the anchor and strategy charts, demonstrated use of accountable talk, and could speak to the daily aim demonstrating that students are aware of the high expectations and the culture of learning.

- Teachers create and deliver professional learning sessions for their colleagues as evidenced by the professional learning plan. These professional learning sessions are created based on teacher need as per feedback from administrative observations and by request from teacher surveys. Coaches support professional learning sessions, teacher team meetings, and implementation of new learnings in the classroom. Actionable feedback to teachers, whether from a snapshot or formal observation, demonstrates not only the high expectations from administration, using questioning and discussion techniques to engage students and to develop their critical thinking skills, but also the system for accountability of expectations. Teachers spoke to the actionable feedback received from leadership as it has helped to guide and facilitate their professional growth.

- Parents and students spoke about the support received for moving the student to the next level. Parents stated they received information from teachers about expectations for their children for both the next grade level and by content area. Teachers provide parents with monthly grade level newsletters regarding non-negotiable expectations, content focus, and support at home. Further, parents receive support in completing the middle school application during workshops held at multiple times and in their home language. Students and parents also spoke about attending trips to visit middle schools to aid in making important decisions.