



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 036 Unionport

Elementary School X036

**1070 Castle Hill Avenue
Bronx
NY 10472**

Principal: Elvira Maresca

**Date of review: November 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

The School Context

P.S. 036 Unionport is an elementary school with 775 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 18% Asian, 11% Black, 65% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 16% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.9%.

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	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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training to support achievement of those expectations. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically conveys a set of unified expectations and provides effective feedback and guidance to students.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability among staff members that results in rigorous work with clear next steps for all that both increases student achievement and strengthens teacher's instructional practices so that students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate their high expectations to all staff members in various ways through use of a staff handbook, email, observations, staff circulars, faculty and vertical team meetings, and professional development. All staff members hold the school-wide belief that students can become leaders of their own learning. To this end, the school has a professional development calendar that includes topics such as looking at student work, analysis of data, and working on school goals, content, and pedagogy. Everyone in the school receives professional development aligned to nurturing learning and developing accountable talk. Scheduled intervisitations to support accountable talk include paraprofessionals and school aides. In addition to Danielson professional development for teachers, paraprofessional received professional development on the use of quick reads and discussions, analysis of running records, and conferencing. School aides receive professional development on how to increase a culture of learning which focuses on developing a mindset of high expectations and using collaborative learning as a support for student conversation in the school yard and lunchroom.
- Across all classrooms visited, students spoke with precision about themselves as learners and their present level of performance, their academic goals, and one or two high leverage areas of focus towards achieving their next level. All students shared examples of detailed teacher feedback on all of the work they presented. Students spoke about needing to get better at analysis in solving multi-steps problems, writing a stronger thesis, and explained how they were improving a human rights essay by adding more details. They all pointed to rubrics as the guide for their work and as a progression to a Level 4. The school had a 4.2% increase in students scoring grade level on the English Language Arts exam.
- Through conversations with the guidance counselor and teachers, in preparation for middle school, students understand how the work in their current grade connects to their next school level and their responsibility in being active learners and collaborators. One student stated, "I know that I will have to use close reading when I get to high school and go to college." Another student said, "Problem solving is important for math in college." When asked what else they needed for high school, students stated that they needed to learn to be "good citizens in the school and in the world". They stated that "working with others is important". One student stated, "We learned to work with each other and use accountable talk to think, agree, and disagree." Another student said, "Yes, I agree." and repeated the school motto "We are crew. There are no passengers."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Although students across classrooms demonstrated high levels of critical thinking and discussion, the lack of strategic scaffolds for English Language Learners results in missed opportunities for all students to be fully engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Across, classrooms, students' responded to various accountable talk prompts and engaged in discussion regarding the task and the content. For example, students, in a grade 5 English Language Arts (ELA) class reading the novel *Esperanza Rising*, challenged each other when discussing the question "Where in the novel are there examples specific to human rights challenges?" Students were asked to consider challenges in the novel in regard to right to life, liberty, personal security, and the denial of property rights to women. One student stated that while the ranch that Esperanza lived on was clearly hers, given the time period, the uncles were in control and denied her of her property, pushing Esperanza's mom into a marriage for property. One student suggested that Esperanza was spoiled because on the train she did not want to share her doll with a girl who was poor. This student was challenged by another student who stated that Esperanza was having a difficult time accepting her new identity due to the loss of their ranch and property. He stated that Esperanza and her mother had to wear clothes from the charity box, and added, "The clothes were embarrassing to Esperanza because she begins to understand that she is not rich anymore."
- Student writing samples across the school were extensive with prompts that demanded opinion, a stated position, and text-based evidence. For example, in fifth grade essays on the text, "From Kosovo to the United States," one student's essay dealt with the war in Serbia and the loss of basic rights, describing the main character's inability to travel freely in the country supported by text-based evidence that cited the page in the text where the character's family was being taken off the train as they traveled.
- Multiple scaffolds such as videos, modeling, and graphic organizers, were observed across classrooms. For example, a social studies lesson on Henry Hudson used a short video as a scaffold for generating notes. A science class about mass began with a BrainPOP video in preparation for a class discussion. The lesson included sets of manipulatives such as weights and scales for students use in small groups. However, review of notebooks revealed that a few students identified by the teacher as newly arrived English Language Learners had no notes.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core and/or content standards and purposefully integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are refined using student work and data.

Impact

A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged in tasks that prepare them for college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- The school created an English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum and pacing calendar using *Ready Gen*, *Expeditionary Learning*, and *Teacher's College and Vermont Writing Collaborative* curricula to identify clear teaching points, high-level texts, and emphasize writing process. In math, the school focused on math fluency skills and incorporated *Exemplars* into *GO Math!* curricula to emphasize deep understanding and application to improve students' solving of word problems, their math modeling skills and their self/peer assessment skills. Both curricula are infused with accountable talk stems to support student discourse and mathematical conversations.
- A review of the ELA curriculum shows that students are exposed to both opinion writing and close reading strategies that support opinion and informational writing. From January through March the whole school works on opinion in a theme-based strategy that builds skills through the grades. For example, in writer's workshop, kindergarten students write about their opinion of their favorite book, in first grade students write a book review, in grade 2, a persuasive essay on a book nomination, in grade 3, an opinion letter, in grade 4, an editorial, and in grade 5, a letter to the editor.
- Using student work from the previous year, teachers analyzed work products to determine what modifications were needed to support student progress throughout curricula units. Modifications made included additional scaffolds, mentor texts, clearer directions, and the creation of teacher-designed student workbooks aligned to the school-blended curriculum in ELA. These workbooks support the instructional shifts by focusing on non-fiction texts, citation of text-based evidence, unpacking vocabulary, and writing from sources. Teachers aligned all the learning targets and texts to progressively build towards the performance based assessments.
- A review of lesson plans demonstrated rigor across the grades. For example, a grade 4 lesson with a learning target of "I can divide tens, hundreds, and thousands by whole numbers to 10," asked student to consider the following question, "When a divisor stays the same but the place value of the dividend increases 10 times, how does the quotient change?" In a grade 5 unit on Human Rights, students were asked to connect two pieces of text (*A Long Walk to Water* and *Esperanza Rising*) to cite evidence in supporting an opinion on human rights violations.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, assessment practices are aligned to the school’s curricula and are calendared so that ongoing assessments carefully track classroom data. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades.

Impact

Teachers and students have actionable feedback on student achievement. Assessment results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The school carefully tracks outcomes using various assessments such as grade K-5 *Degrees of Reading Assessments*, *Teachers’ College Benchmarks*, *Ready Gen* and *Expeditionary Learning* performance tasks with mid- and end- unit assessments, *GO Math!* chapter tests, *Exemplars* math baseline, mid- and end-of-year assessments, social studies and science performance tests, and running records. *Measure of Student Learning* data that indicated that grade one students reading-level performance was 2% lower than the school’s overall on-grade performance rate on State exams, precipitated changes to shared reading for additional focus on making meaning and vocabulary development and the addition of a pre-narrative essay component.
- The school has created and adapted many types of rubrics and checklists, procedures, and protocols for all of the grades and across all of the subjects such as the SOLVE problem-solving procedure, the *Exemplar* Jigsaw rubric, a grade 1 opinion writing checklist and a grade 3 informational writing rubric. Students know how to use these tools successfully and they know where they are in the continuum of learning and can articulate this. However a close look at the science and social studies rubrics show that students are rated based on having “some” or a “clear” understanding of the content and in writing based on having “clear” or “well-developed” ideas without specifying any criterion on the content or ideas being evaluated.
- The school analyzed the results of the math State exam and noticed that students in grades 3 and 4 were having difficulty with number sense, relating place value to use of operations and understanding relationships between values and fractions. As a result of this analysis changes were made in every grade beginning in pre-kindergarten with the introduction of subatizing (number sense) and emphasis on conceptual understanding, modeling, representation, and problem solving.

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

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. Distributive leadership structures are embedded.

Impact

Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning and their work and collaboration has resulted in improved teacher practices and mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- A math teacher team, examining student work on a word problem, saw that some students were not using math charts as demanded by the unit task which asked students to set up a chart listing the days a runner was running and the distance in meters for each day. Teachers discussed how they could increase students' use of charts, in order to ensure that students create a visual display and express results using scientific notation. One teacher reflected on the student work and how the Common Core standards demanded multiple representations, which she explained was not the way she was taught math in school. The teacher shared, "Initially, using the graphs and charts was a challenge for me and I had to look at the answers to understand what was expected other than the standard answer. Working on this team increased my mathematical understanding and practice, and I have gotten better at using the charts."
- Teachers stated that while students knew how to use a new strategy called SOLVE (**S**tudy the problem, **O**rganize the facts, **L**imit your plan, **V**erify results with actions, **E**xplain your results) as a way of unpacking math problems, their approach was not comprehensive, as students did not use all the components of SOLVE even when provided with worksheets that had areas for answers. The teachers hypothesized that students became overwhelmed when looking at an empty page. Two teachers collaborated and created a color-coded worksheet aligned to the SOLVE strategy which also uses colors for each letter in its acronym. This resulted in students completing all the work for the math problem as they could visually see what areas they were not completing. Teachers also stated that since the colors represent a step in the strategy, that now they could "see where the breakdown is happening" and support students with a specific scaffold. The two teachers readily shared their organizer with teachers in all grades and the school adopted the SOLVE five-step math strategy.
- Teachers referenced the use of the five components of the *Exemplars* rubric to inform areas for re-teaching, the school-wide adoption of graphic organizers from Integrated Co-Teaching classes, as well teachers' selecting supplemental teaching materials as changes that came from teacher team meetings and that are now embedded across grades. School leaders regularly meet with members of the vertical team or participate in their meetings. Ideas from this team are then implemented in the school. One teacher shared "The grade leaders communicate with the principal, but you really do not have to be a grade leader, every teacher's idea is valued." Another teacher stated, "All teams are focused on sharing, but not just sharing, the school goal is how to deepen comprehension, and we are all working on that."