



# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**P.S. 041 Gun Hill Road**

**Elementary School X041**

**3352 Olinville Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10467**

**Principal: Erica Tobia**

**Date of review: January 26, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

## The School Context

P.S. 041 Gun Hill Road is an elementary school with 966 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 53% Black, 43% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 9% English Language Learners and 17% 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 90.4%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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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 focused work and the variation of the make up of the teacher teams, as well as, the frequency of team meetings provide all teachers with opportunities to engage in shared leadership and professional collaboration resulting in improved teacher capacity and mastery of student goals for groups of students across the school community.

### Supporting Evidence

- The administration and the teachers believe that both teachers and students “learn by doing”. From this belief and through reading research-based common texts the school community, developed their foundational structures over several years. Last spring and summer, the data team looked at student work and analyzed state and school assessment results. This led to the determination that the students were not succeeding at the intended level in math problem solving, reading proficiency, or the writing process. To this end, the teacher grade-level teams and the data core vertical team worked together to determine a new problem-solving math block, a new flexible-small group guided reading practice, and a new writing curriculum to be used to embed the writing process. The latest data from the *Fountas and Pinnell* assessment demonstrate an upward trend across grades for reading and positive results across grades for math as well. All teachers have various teams to support their professional growth and focus on schoolwide initiatives. Each type of teacher team meets multiple times weekly, through scheduled common planning time. The grade professional learning communities (PLCs) meet to plan instruction, to analyze student work and data, to determine next steps, and to share best practices.
- Each grade level has a team member who sits on the Data Core Team (DCT). During these meetings the teachers examine student work and assessment data. Collaboratively they decide on the gaps that exist in student understandings. They then determine strategic, results-focused, time-bound (SMART) goals for their grade level PLCs, create agendas aligned to the schoolwide initiatives. The DCT meets weekly, rotating school wide initiatives in a three-week cycle starting with reading, writing and ending with mathematics. In this way, the grade level teams have time to implement the SMART goals and determine the data to analyze in the following DCT meeting. A teacher shared, that, “this helps us take responsibility for our own learning.” In addition, there is a schoolwide math committee, consisting of two teachers from each grade who meet twice monthly to maintain the focus on the problem-solving math initiative with collaborative solutions to rubrics, assessments, and revised problems. In the math committee, teachers have established critical friends as sounding boards working together to sharpen their instructional skills. Additionally, a new teacher committee meets monthly for mentoring and professional development (PD).
- Teachers create and deliver PD. Additionally, math coaches from an outside consulting organization support them in their implementation of the problem-solving initiative. Distributed leadership is embedded into the teacher teams. Each team has a teacher leader who also sits on the DCT. Teachers shared that these teams positively impact their teaching keeping it new and relevant.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across the vast majority of classes, teaching methods do not yet strategically provide high-quality supports, multiple entry points, and extensions for student work products and discussions.

### Impact

As a result not all learners as yet demonstrate high levels of thinking and take ownership of their work.

### Supporting Evidence

- Lessons offer multiple entry points, but they are not yet strategically provided across the vast majority of classes. For example, in a first grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class writing assignments, sentence frames, and papers were leveled and some high-needs students worked with an adult using white board slates to create parts of their first draft. Students' scaffolds were data-based, pre-determined, and layered with multiple entry points including discussion, quick draws, and writing on color paper, with different colors denoting different levels. However, in other classes the teachers provided students with multiple entry points but the strategic quality of the supports varied from student to student.
- Across classes, students were provided opportunities to demonstrate their thinking, however high-quality extensions were not always apparent. For instance, in a math class a higher-order extension allowed partners who finished the problem to create their own problems and have their partners solve it. Yet, in a grade three writing class, students completed an essay using text-based evidence to support their reasons and had a differentiated worksheet supporting their level, but the extension only required that they add additional supporting reasons and transfer them into their notebook.
- In a grade three reading lesson, students read independently while the teacher worked with a small group. Routines and scaffolds were evident and students had leveled books and notes in their reading logs. After the focused mini-lesson with the small group, the teacher worked with one student, having him read to her as she used the note-card to capture the running record. She then asked him to write a page summary on a sticky note as a next step. However, she did not provide him with a method to take ownership of that step which is the schoolwide practice. Similarly, in a grade four math problem-solving workshop, students worked in groups and the teacher moved from group-to-group. Some students became frustrated because the pacing of the group work did not support them in solving the problem. However, other groups in the class were able to persevere and move toward creating their own problems.

## Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

### Findings

Strategic curricula decisions made by school leaders and faculty have resulted in coherence and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards across subject areas. Teachers use student work and relevant data to adjust curricula and tasks.

### Impact

As a result of rigorous habits embedded across subjects and grades, within units and academic tasks all learners, including student subgroups, think critically and create their own meaning through evidence-based expectations. Teachers use student data to ensure all learners have access to curricula and instructional tasks that are cognitively challenging that result in students demonstrating higher-order thinking skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- The staff analyzed data from the New York State assessment results in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, to determine the areas of need for their students and to close the achievement gaps. They determined that students needed more opportunities to practice problem solving in math, authentic writing and process writing, and close reading strategies. To this end, staff strategically integrated these into set times within the week. These focused skills are evident in the curriculum maps used school wide. Since problem solving, close reading, and writing are intentionally woven into the curriculum, all students have access to these standards and instructional shifts across grades because they are spiraled from grade to grade, intentionally woven within units and lessons thus, creating coherence.
- Teachers have reflected upon and revised the *ReadyGen* and *Go Math!* curricula maps over the summer and revised lesson plans based on student work and data. From this thoughtful exercise, teachers determined additional supports, scaffolds, extensions, and groupings for students to cognitively engage in the curricula and meet the intended outcomes. For example, for close reading, teachers use a system of notecards for *Fountas and Pinnell* running records, and for conferencing with students.
- Curricular planning documents are aligned across grades and subjects, using agreed-upon school wide formats. Grade level maps demonstrate the Common Core Learning Standards, teaching points, and materials and resources needed. Lesson plans include the essential question, the lesson objective in the form of “I Can” statements, Common Core Learning Standards, the materials, connection to writing, *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) leveled questions, the learning activity, differentiation, active engagement, problem solving, independent practice, closure, homework (in the upper grades), and the teacher reflection. Lesson plans indicate student grouping and the reason for the placement.
- Curricula documents demonstrate revisions based on student work and data. For example, each grade has a revised writing curriculum yearly overview that has the *ReadyGen* units, reading anchor, supporting texts, and writing to three texts. There is abundant evidence of revised units based on assessment results, providing additional writing opportunities, “I can” learning points, multiple entry points, and assessments. For example, one assessment revealed a need to focus on sequence of events and transitional words. Lesson plans also demonstrated revisions, with strategic scaffolds, a longer read aloud, guided practice, and more close reading questions.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, track progress, adjust curricula and instructional practices.

### Impact

By providing actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement, students, including English Language Learners (ELL) and students with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school employs *Datacation*, an online grade book with portals for teachers called *Skedula*, and *PupilPath* for students and parents. Each student’s attendance, coursework, and progress within each course, gives a clear portrait of student mastery and progress toward the next grade. Each student’s *PupilPath* page uses color-coding to show the task submitted, status of grading, including rubric score, or awaiting grade. Parents stated they use the parent portal not only to track their children’s progress, but often as a conversation point to help support their children’s work.
- Students stated they have rubrics and checklists for tasks and assessments and receive grades and actionable feedback from teachers with next steps. Students spoke about next steps teachers provided and how to improve their work using the feedback to revise current and future work. Administrators and teachers agree that multiple opportunities to learn a skill or concept are to be provided to students who fail to master it on the summative assessments. Students shared that they meet with the teacher in small groups and learn it in a new way and then retake a new assessment. This provides evidence of the implementation of the school wide focus on the tenet of Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* addressing assessment in instruction. With that in mind, the Data Core Team (DCT) created a yearlong schoolwide goals’ benchmark tracker. The DCT then creates incremental data based SMART goals for a three-week cycle to provide teachers the time to implement the plan and return with new data. Teachers create small intervals of targeted SMART goals and then revise lessons accordingly. For instance, “By December 18, 2015, students who are currently a level 1 in accordance with the MOSL informational rubric, will participate in targeted writing instruction for twenty minutes twice a week, that will result in 80% of students moving to one level or higher on the MOSL rubric.”
- The administration and teacher leaders have created informal learning partners, with the help of an outside facilitator who is also working with two other schools with similar foci on problem solving, reading, and writing. The schools inter-visit and have become critical friends.
- Teachers implemented the third administration of *Fountas and Pinnell*. The data indicates a positive-growth trend for all students. Performance increased as follows: kindergarten up 44%, grade 1 up 38%, grade 2 up 36%, grade 4 up 29%, and grade 5 up 24%. This upward trend continued in the mid-year results as well, showing increases for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, in problem solving and in writing.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Expectations connected to a path to college and career are effectively communicated to families by school leaders and staff.

### Impact

A culture of mutual accountability exists among staff. The school successfully partners with families to support progress towards those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- Regarding children’s progress toward the schoolwide high expectations, teachers stated that they consistently communicate to families. Communications include phone calls, emails, texts, backpacked letters, grade-team newsletters, notifications through *Skedula*, and in-person appointments. Parents agreed that teachers consistently communicate with them and this communication has helped them to help their children succeed in school. Parents shared they collaborate with teachers to understand the curricula to be able to help their child at home. One parent stated, “I don’t have to wait until the marking period to end because I am here all the time and ask how my child is doing and can course-correct in the moment. We work together.”
- Parents shared that they are able to contact teachers directly through *Skedula*, an online grade program, and have received direct responses that have supported their child in completing projects or assignments. Parents partner with the staff as they work together to support the children’s academic growth. Others agreed when one parent stated, “the work and resources to help the parents is wonderful. I was complaining about the Common Core and the teachers helped me to relearn math the new way. Now when my daughter brings home work, I can help her and if I don’t understand I can login to what she learned and then work with her.” Students stated that they know they are doing well because of their grades on progress reports and report cards. A schoolwide point system, using different colored popsicle sticks provides positive student encouragement toward scholastic expectations.
- Parents shared their pleasure with the new focus on math problem solving, reading, and writing workshops. One parent stated, “The nice thing about the reorganization is this method allows for progress along the way for all groups and it helps give them incentive.” Others agreed and they are seeing improvement in their child’s work.
- Workshops have been provided for parents to help them understand the middle school application process. Parents and students discussed visiting college and middle school tours and fairs and shared how helpful these were in their determining a middle school to attend. These workshops supported the selection and application completion process.
- Through weekly bulletins, the staff handbook, and PD, the administration provides consistent communications to all staff. School leaders support staff implementation of these expectations through a consistent cycle of observations and actionable feedback. Adjustments to the professional development plan are made accordingly. Teachers and teacher leaders create and present the PD, as well as outside coaches who support teachers.