



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 076 The Bennington School

Elementary School X076

**900 Adeo Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Louise Sedotto

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

The School Context

P.S. 076 The Bennington School is an elementary school with 1,064 students from grade Kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 45% Black, 42% Hispanic, and 8% White students. The student body includes 13% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.7%.

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	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	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	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	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 collaboration resulting in improved teacher capacity and mastery of student goals for groups of students across the school community.

Supporting Evidence

- At least four times weekly, when grade teams or professional learning communities (PLC) meet, they determine next steps in teaching based on student work and data. Teachers make instructional changes and the minutes guide the next steps to ensure that students achieve mastery. A vast majority of teachers stated that this lesson study work has not only supported their personal and team practice, but has also increased student mastery. One teacher stated and others agreed that, “as a grade we work really well together and help each other to determine what is working or not working without competition”. Others agreed that they work well together, “we visit each other’s rooms, and get feedback daily as we get better at what we do and watch students grow.” The latest assessment data from *Fountas and Pinnell* running records, *Foundations*, and *Go Math!* recorded on the student profile sheet indicates increased student performance.
- Collaboration also entails the creation of a newly integrated English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies curricula by teachers from across the grades. The cluster teacher leader stated that she “brings the curriculum maps back to the cluster. She leads teachers in discussions regarding how to integrate social studies, questioning, and ELA into technology, science, and special areas”. Another teacher stated, and all agreed, that curriculum mapping makes more sense to them because now they understand how lessons flow from one learning concept to the next, knowing that inferencing lessons on kindergarten and grade 2 are planned in grade 5 with similar approaches, but spiraled up, as the rigor increases with the grades. Teachers agreed that curriculum writing has made the PLCs ‘tighter’ in their implementation and revision cycles, as they share with Google Docs.
- The school, as part of the Learning Partners Pilot Program, collaborates with two other schools to engage staff in inter-visitations and provide each other actionable feedback. The positive results of this collaboration include increased teacher leadership to plan, implement, and facilitate professional development (PD) as well as deeper insight into their own implementation of providing differentiation and engagement for students. Teacher leaders facilitate creating, implementing, and leading PD with other Learning Partner schools. Teachers and the administration feel this has been one of the most powerful professional development activities they have experienced.
- Distributive leadership is embedded as evidence by teacher leaders, who are Model Teachers facilitating the team meetings. Staff stated that an increased number of staff creates and delivers the professional development. Teachers also attend PD outside the school and turnkey for the staff at future meetings.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Although teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, across a vast majority of classes, they do not yet strategically provide high-quality supports and extensions for all student work products and discussions.

Impact

The engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English Language Learners and students with disabilities does not yet reflect high levels of student, thinking, discussion, and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Assuring that students understand the learning target is the school wide goal. Teachers consistently ask, “What are you learning?” “Why are you learning this?”, and “How do you know you have learned this?” Across classrooms, students were able to articulate what they were learning but were not always able to state why they were learning the concept being taught. In a kindergarten ICT class, students worked individually while sitting in groups to complete demonstrating number pairs of 10. While students checked each other’s work and moved on to a choice of math games, not all students were accurate in their “peer checks”, showing that they were not always able to show that they knew what they had learned.
- Multiple entry points are evident across classes but high-quality supports and extensions are not yet strategically provided across the vast majority of classes. For example, in one special education class, students worked with leveled texts and had differentiated curricula, with adults facilitating their learning. In another class in an integrated literacy and social studies lesson most of the class worked independently while seated in groups with leveled non-fiction texts using a graphic organizer which when finished, they used their independent reading books to complete the same graphic organizer. In another class, students had leveled texts and every one had the same graphic organizer, yet a few students were not sure how to complete it while others had almost completed the independent reading application.
- Student discussion is built into the lessons. The staff and administration feel this will give students opportunities to make sense of their learning and put it in their own words. In some classes, students first worked alone and then shared their ideas. In a grade 4 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students worked in data-determined groups to select a strategy to solve a problem first individually, then shared their answers, constructed a group solution and when the timer expired, the groups rotated the problem to the next table. When the group finished early, they worked on math facts using flash cards and counting tiles.
- Although discussion prompts were employed, not all students own the discussions. In a grade 5 literacy lesson, heterogeneously grouped students engaged in discussion supported each other, respectfully disagreed, and provided examples from previous lessons to support answers. With a group reluctant to share, the teacher provided prompts. In a grade 3 class, students had a pair-share opportunity and a few shared out to the whole class using discussion prompts. Yet, in the same class, a small group of students worked with the teacher. While some students answered teacher-directed questions, not all students were engaged thus missing opportunities for all to own the discussion.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

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

Impact

Curricula is coherent across grades and subject areas and promotes college and career readiness for all students, so that individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving students, ELLs, and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula, performance tasks, and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers determined that using the *ReadyGen* program was not meeting the needs of their students. Data revealed a negative trend. To that end, teachers created a newly integrated curriculum for English Language Arts (ELA) and social studies, starting in October 2014 for kindergarten through second grades, and further development of the curriculum for the entire school started in the spring and summer of 2015. A pair of teachers from each grade level work on the curricula writing team with the support of the administration and an outside consultant to strategically develop this curriculum, integrate writing, reading, and content as well as the instructional shifts across grades. Teachers started with a scope and sequence, mapping out the New York State Common Core Learning Standards for both ELA and social studies and the instructional shifts. Then the curriculum writing team worked backwards with a focus on what these standards require students to know and be able to do, created “I Can” statements for both language and content objectives, essential questions and learning targets. Reading and writing was the focus for teaching the content.
- Teachers use a common template for all curricula planning documents, which are stored on Google Docs, a computer application that allows for transparency across the staff and administration, and ease of providing collegial feedback. Teachers memorialize the revisions to the curricula in the Google Docs program as they reflect on components of lessons for re-teaching, regrouping, and refining.
- The school implements *GO Math!*, *Foss Science Kits*, *Fundations*, *Fountas and Pinnell*. In addition *Waterford*. *Waterford* an intervention program is used for students for English is a New Language (ENL), students with disabilities, or struggling readers. The school has intentionally incorporated metacognition skills across the school’s curricula for students to learn monthly. For example, the skill of synthesizing was targeted during the month of this review. Students and parents are able to articulate the metacognitive strategy for the month, while students explained their next steps in their work as it relates to these college and career-ready strategies. Within each of these Common Core-aligned curricula, teachers revise curricula based on data and student work. Teachers collaboratively reflect on what practices worked and which did not to refine academic tasks. This assures that all students with have multiple opportunities to access the curricula and demonstrate their thinking. Embedded in the curricula are recursive opportunities for all students to reflect on their previous work and to improve it using newly learned skills.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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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, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

Impact

These assessments provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement, so that all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Previously, the school used the *ReadyGen* program and the teachers continuously analyzed the test results. They attributed the decline in performance, as a result of the curricula not meeting their students' needs. The teachers and administration have since created their own interdisciplinary ELA and social studies curricula and aligned assessments. As a result of implementing the new integrated curriculum, there are positive school wide growth results using the benchmark reading assessment from *Fountas and Pinnell (F&P)*. Since the beginning of this school year through November 2015, the *F&P* results showed the largest growth in kindergarten at 23%, grade 1 at 25%, and grade 2 at 45%. Grades 4 and 5 had modest growth at 8 and 9% respectively. Additionally, there is an upward trend with 30% of ENL students and 31% of students with disabilities who have demonstrated growth based on the *F&P* levels in this same period. This data ties to an *F&P* summary of formative data. Teachers stated they collaborate during team meetings to track student progress and adjust all curricula based on student needs, as they discuss revisions to lessons based on student work and data. Additionally, teachers pointed to the new integrated ELA social studies curriculum as the lever for this growth because it is meeting the needs of their students.
- The school implements student-friendly rubrics and checklists to support students in understanding expectations and learning how to reach their best. Students agreed that they use rubrics to help them get a better grade. They use the feedback from teachers to help them improve on the next assignment. A student said, "I used my schema or background knowledge to understand the text and made an inference. Next time, I need to use more of my prior knowledge." Student work posted on bulletin boards and in files reveal grades and actionable feedback that are rooted in the rubric and written in glows and grows.
- Teachers and administrators stated they use Common Core-aligned curricula assessments and teacher-created ones, as well as conference notes, guided reading notes, exit slips, and observation checklists to determine student achievement. An assessment calendar notes the common assessments by month, the designated curriculum, the assessment titles, and the units so that teachers administer the assessments, submit the monthly tracking sheets and then analyze the results together. The narrative performance task results from the baseline assessment to the present unit have shown that students from across grades have increased in proficiency demonstrating a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers also use common assessment results to adjust their small flexible student groups for re-teaching. Additionally, teachers create a student literacy profile for each student that remains with the student through each grade level he or she is in the school demonstrating a student's increased mastery.

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 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 these high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration provides consistent communication to all staff regarding high expectations through the use of weekly memos called the *Bennington Crier*, bulletins, staff handbook, and professional development. Teachers and teacher leaders conducted a survey to determine, create, and present the professional development, including the Learning Partners Program. The professional development plan demonstrates a focus on what the teachers most requested, such as, teaching guided reading and the new integrated ELA curricula. To support staff's implementation of these expectations, school leaders utilize a consistent cycle of observation providing actionable feedback, which then allows for continual updates of the professional development plan.
- Parents all agreed that the teachers consistently communicate to them regarding their children's progress toward the school's high expectations. These communications include *Coffee Friday* with the principal, emails, texts, phone calls, backpacked letters, grade-team newsletters, and notifications through *WhizFish*, the P.S. 76 app with a few teachers also using Class Dojo. Parents shared that they are able to contact teachers and have received direct responses that have supported their child in completing homework or projects. Some parents even use the WhizFish application on their phones for ease of access. Parents also shared that they partner with the staff as they work together to support the children's academic growth. All parents agreed that they not only feel welcomed at the school but that everyone collaborates to help their children succeed. Students stated that they look at their assignments to be completed and discuss their progress with their parents. One parent stated, and many agreed, that the tips regarding and useful websites on the grade-team newsletters help her to help her child with schoolwork. Additionally, many stated that they have downloaded and used the new P.S. 76 web-application that affords them the newsletters and communications all in one location. All stated that the method of communication does not matter. Instead, it is the partnership with staff that always provides the great support for their child's achievement.
- Workshops have been provided for parents to help them understand the middle school application process. Parents discussed attending middle school tours and fairs and shared how helpful these were in their determining which middle school their child should attend based on their career goals. Students readily shared their current reading levels and goals. The upper grade students expressed how grades would affect their middle school selections. Parents stated that the workshops supported the selection process as well as how to complete the application.