



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 108 Philip J. Abinanti

Elementary School X108

**1166 Neill Avenue
Bronx
NY 10461**

Principal: Charles Sperrazza

**Date of review: February 23, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

The School Context

P.S. 108 Philip J. Abinanti is an elementary school with 599 students from grade kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 11% Asian, 7% Black, 44% Hispanic, and 37% White students. The student body includes 11% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.3%.

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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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	Proficient
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

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

Impact

There is coherence across grades in subjects in curricula that support college and career readiness. A diverse group of students has access to curricula due to ongoing curricula refinement.

Supporting Evidence

- English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum maps demonstrate that students are involved in school-wide integrated writing units where all grades, kindergarten to grade 5, focus on the same genre writing including non-fiction science and social studies content writing. For example, in November, all students were involved in informational writing with kindergarten students studying the habitats of polar bears and penguins, while grade 2 studied changes in New York City over time. These units focused on tasks that required close reading and annotation of text.
- ELA maps also reflect that the school deliberately included units providing students opportunities to read poetry, folktales, realistic fiction, and fantasy in between non-fiction units in order to ensure the 50-50 balance of fiction and non-fiction reading and writing required by the instructional shifts.
- The *Go Math!* pacing calendar reflects sequence changes that were based on student performance on the State exam, as well as student data from class assessments. For example, grade 4 State exam performance was not strong in the topics of volume, area, and perimeter and a review of the pacing calendar revealed that these topics were covered after the state exam. Changes were made to reverse order of chapters to ensure that students had access to this content before the exam. The school recently administered a math mid-year assessment to measure student progress and assess the impact of changes made in the curriculum. Changes such as these have already demonstrated an increase in student performance. Across grades, numbers of students at performance Level 1 have increased, while numbers of students on Levels 3 and 4 have increased, with double-digit gains noted for the majority of students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEPs) and for English Language Learners (ELLs).
- Lesson plans and units reflect the school's focus of embedding the instructional shift of academic vocabulary. Vocabulary is listed in teacher plans and taught explicitly to students. During lessons, students are required to use academic vocabulary to explain their thinking orally and in their writing.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create rubrics aligned with the school's curricula and consistently use ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

The school consistently assesses to meet student needs. However, assessments do not always result in effective adjustment and feedback while actionable is not always meaningful.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teachers consistently used the thumbs-up strategy as a quick assessment. In one 5 grade class, studying Civil Rights in the 1960's, the checking for understanding of the previous day's lesson and the meaning of the word segregation, asked for thumbs-up or -down. In contrast, a more targeted approach was observed in a grade 4 math class, where the teacher strategically assessed students' knowledge on division in base 10 by asking students to solve problems and assessed their knowledge at a glance of their work and assigned students to new groups by rearranging students' names in a pocket folder.
- Peer feedback was observed in some classrooms and used for different purposes. For example, in one grade 4 math class, students completed their work on fractions and whole numbers and signed up on a clipboard to receive feedback from another student. One student explained that this process consisted of explaining their answer and thinking to their partner and getting feedback on their strategy. In a grade 5 writing class, the teacher encouraged peer feedback and modeled how students could use the rubric to support their peers. Volunteer students read their writing aloud and their peers used the rubric on the board to provide them with rubric-based scores with next steps.
- Some of the rubrics that are used are not always student friendly and thus not always meaningful to students. For example, in a grade 4 classroom, students could not articulate the meaning of a performance task scoring rubric that stated, "partially accurate task fulfills most requirements of task with some knowledge of mathematical concepts". During the student meeting, students shared written feedback that included some clauses only. For example, one glow was written as, "opening facts, closing, purposes" and a grow statement as, "details, describing words, convention". Students stated that these phrases were explained during conferencing.
- In a grade 3 math class, the teacher had students explain their work as they solved problems on the board. The teacher used questioning as a check for understanding to have students uncover their mistakes. One student spoke about division and used the word "quotient" instead of "divisor". The teacher asked, "Are you sure you know the meaning of that word?" The teacher then had the student revisit academic words for division and use them in context while explaining the problem.

Additional Findings

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

Findings

Distributive leadership structures are in place and teachers consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Teachers have a voice and their inquiry work and decisions have resulted in improved student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade 1 teacher team meeting, in preparation for an upcoming opinion essay unit, teachers examined baseline written essays, where students stated their opinion on who they thought was the most important community helper. Teachers noticed that student writing was largely unsubstantiated opinion, procedural in nature, and lacked transition. They noticed that while students were able to write one paragraph with detail, their second paragraph was just a rewording of their first paragraph, and that students were not able to develop a second idea. The team compared these findings to observations from previous units. They concluded that a strength observed in this baseline assessment was the students' consistent use of a good introduction to hook the reader. Teachers also observed that ELLs were still struggling with the writing. One teacher concurred that grade 2 ELLs struggled in writing as well. This prompted the teachers to begin to wonder if ELL students needed more language specific supports than the ones that were in place. A look at the English Language Arts data shows that there has been a decline in students scoring Level 1, but unlike for students with IEPs who demonstrated gains to level 4 on the same grade, ELLs' improvement was from Level 1 to Level 2. Math data shows gains for all student groups.
- At another teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about how they felt that their attention to ensuring the implementation of non-fiction reading and writing had caused the school to heavily emphasize non-fiction in support of literacy instructional shifts. Teachers visited the curriculum in September and as a result of this, proposed the idea of adding a series of short fiction units to the curriculum to expose students to a greater diversity of literary genres.
- A new teacher-led project supporting social studies curriculum and hands-on projects called Content Fridays was implemented in September 2015. This class combining social studies and ELA instruction and assessment serves as an extension into the curricula. Teachers in each grade become an expert in a particular social studies topic and design hands-on instruction and research projects based on the grade-level social studies content. Each Friday, teachers spend an afternoon with a group of students that may be from multiple classes. For a few weeks the group of students and teachers, focus on a topic in social studies. This initiative allows students to work independently and/or in small groups to present what they learn in a creative format. Teacher teams spoke about how this initiative has increased both student and staff engagement, as it has allowed teachers to engage with a wide range of students.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and families in connection to college and career readiness. Teachers participate in training that promotes their accountability and their achievement of set high expectations.

Impact

Teachers hold themselves accountable to meeting the school's expectations. Parents understand their children's progress toward meeting achievement expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school belief is that all students can learn given time and the appropriate supports and is reflected in the school wide focus on differentiation. To this end, teachers have received professional development in Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), a program that supports ELLs in acquiring language and content. A teacher book study of *Comprehension Connections* supports the school-wide initiative on strengthening student inference skills.
- Academic vocabulary is the school's instructional focus and teachers have received extensive professional development through studying *Beck's Bringing Words to Life* to understand tiered words, which are called "smart words" at the school. Using this book study, teachers have created a school protocol called, *The Six Steps to Smart Words* to embed vocabulary in lessons and instruction. Tiered vocabulary word walls were observed in classrooms. Additionally teachers were observed pre-teaching key vocabulary and students observed using tiered vocabulary in their discussions, as well as in their written work products. A review of observations using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* reveals that teachers receive feedback on this instructional focus.
- The school has built in many supports to help parents assist their children at home. For example, on Tuesday afternoons there is a parent academy to support parents' acquisition of English to promote a stronger home-school connection. Parents stated that the school has high academic expectations and that they know this because of open house, curriculum night, and a parent workshop on the New York State exams that have made them become familiar with expectations for students. They shared that there is a school-wide focus on scholarship and celebrating student progress with practices such as honor roll. Additionally, parents stated that the school was able to differentiate, providing supports for both struggling students and high achievers, through individualized programs such as Reflex Math and Raz-Kids. Also, they stated that they felt that the school was a very welcoming, caring place that consistently communicated student progress through multiple means. Parents spoke about the transparency of Pupil Path, both as an online resource that allowed them to follow student grades and progress, and as a platform for email communication with teachers. Some parents took out their Smartphone to show the icon for Remind, a smart phone application that allows them to keep in contact with the school. They stated that progress reports sent in between report cards allow them to be able to secure any needed intervention to assure their children do not fall behind.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies including questioning, scaffolds in English and/or native language where appropriate, and routines consistently provide multiple entry points. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation but planned entry points are not always strategically planned.

Impact

All students are engaged in appropriately challenging learning tasks and exhibit higher-order thinking. However, lack of strategically planned supports affects all students' full participation and ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 3 math class, students turned and talked to share their preferred strategy with peers to answer, "What strategies can we use to divide?" During the share out, students not only named the strategy they used but also gave concrete details on how they used the strategy. One student stated, "Well, once you know the total, let's say the total is 50, then you create equal groups of 5 and that's how to divide 50." Another student said, "Yes, with repeated subtraction, if you know the product of seven time five, then you can use repeated subtraction of one of those numbers and count the groups to see the division." Similarly, in one of the many small groups in a grade 4 class exploring the Bill of Rights, students synthesized several articles on different religions for a large group share out. They discussed that writing a short play about how the Bill of Rights supports the first amendment was the best way to engage an audience. Student-led conversations collaboratively built on students' ideas on both content and product. This level of student ownership in discussion was not observed across all classrooms.
- Entry points and scaffolds observed in various classrooms, included think-pair-share, linking prior knowledge, partnering students, and modeling. In one grade 4 math class, students worked with fraction tiles to see relationships between fractions and in a grade 2 class a group of students used Raz-Kids to read text on their level. While these supports provided opportunities for cognitive engagement for English language learners such as in a second grade class where ELL students were paired with students who were more proficient, these scaffolds was not specifically geared to supporting student-led discourse for ELLs.
- A review of student work products including samples of student writing reflect a high level of student thinking. Work shared during student interviews displayed student writing skills that demonstrate strong alignment to the Common Core standards. In samples of narrative essay writing, student work demonstrated the effective use of various writing techniques such as establishing a situation, engaging the reader, providing a clear sequence of events and the use of descriptive details and dialogue. For example, in narrative writing samples connected to family traditions, students created opportunities for the reader to sit in on a moment with their families. Many of the essays were about the anticipation of special celebrations connected to Christmas or religious ceremonies such as baptism. In the samples observed, students weaved together family conversation, description of setting and meals, and even internal dialogue that illustrated how these routines and interactions around these special celebrations displayed their tradition.