



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**P.S. 119**

**Elementary School X119**

**1075 Pugsley Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10472**

**Principal: Michele Montana**

**Date of review: May 3, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

## The School Context

P.S. 119 is an elementary school with 982 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 31% Asian, 9% Black, 52% Hispanic, and 7% White students. The student body includes 25% English Language Learners and 13% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.6%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, through training, and ongoing communication. The school leaders and staff communicate expectations to students and families and keep them abreast of student progress toward college and career readiness.

### Impact

The school leaders maintain a system of accountability toward expectations amongst staff and helps families understand student progress toward those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- Staff consistently communicates to parents through phone calls, email, or in-person. Some staff members go beyond these methods of communication to include weekly progress reports and weekly class newsletters. Additionally, some teachers communicate with families through the online program, Class Dojo, to send messages, pictures of student work, and progress reports. Parents stated that they are very pleased with the level of communication from the teachers and administration. A few teachers created homework help sessions during parent outreach on Tuesdays to support parents in helping their children understand and complete their homework. Parents cited the school newsletter, *Learning Matters*, as an important way they stay informed. The newsletter highlights curricular activities such as a writing workshop, the writing process, and the annual science fair. Parents also spoke about the workshops provided to support them in helping their children succeed academically. Topics covered by the workshops included, helping children think for themselves, using a particular math strategy, and how to help children deal with test anxiety.
- Parent support for the middle school selection process is provided through workshops, school fairs and tours, and through the active role of the guidance counselor. Guidance counselors visit classes to discuss the middle school application process and expand the support provided the parents. Parents enthusiastically shared that the school supported them in completing the middle school application. Staff accompanied parents to open houses, and school fairs, as well as discussed issues such as, travel time for their children. Students spoke about attending the upcoming career day, where they are able to attend many presentations by people from different careers.
- To provide staff with consistent messages regarding expectations, the administration detailed school goals, action plans, and next steps in the opening day professional learning session, setting the tone for the year. Additionally, school leaders set forth the protocol for teachers to create balanced literacy plans and provided them with training. There is a professional development committee, where teachers develop and deliver professional development to their peers, conduct inter-visitations, and share best practices. A system to monitor the implementation of these professional learning sessions, includes frequent classroom observations and actionable feedback, as well as, coaching from the assistant principals to ensure that staff is working toward the school's achievement goals. In addition, consultant coaches support teachers in implementing new programs.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula, Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, and the instructional shifts. Classroom teaching practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best, and to provide multiple entry points and opportunities for discussion for diverse students.

### Impact

As a result, students are not yet consistently required to make their thinking visible through active participation. Inconsistent teaching practices lead to uneven engagement in challenging tasks and in students' demonstrating higher-order thinking skills in discussions and work products, including the work of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- The administration and staff believe students learn best through “rigorous, engaging instruction with opportunities to question and apply knowledge, and ongoing assessment and self-reflection.” Additionally, the staff defines engagement and intellectual independence when students are “making their thinking visible as they explore conflicting views, infer, argue, and solve complex problems.” However, this belief system is in the beginning stages, and is being implemented unevenly across classes and grades as observed in those classes visited.
- To varying degrees, students engaged in challenging tasks with discussion and higher-order questions. Students were engaged as they answered the questions individually, and then shared their answers in their groups, with most students engaged in some classes. In an English as a New Language (ENL) class, students learned the concept of line breaks in poems. The teacher provided anchor charts and a visual for students as she physically cut the lines of the poem with scissors. Students had an opportunity to engage in a pair-share and then the teacher called on a few students where the share out became a back and forth from the teacher to student to teacher. The ability for students to share their thinking was limited. In a reading workshop in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were divided into two groups, each one facilitated by one of the teachers. One teacher worked with the students with special needs regarding a strategy to remember a passage's content. The teacher asked closed-ended, fill-in-the-blank questions, and students responded back to the teacher without the opportunity to engage in discussion and limiting the demonstration of their thinking.
- Some classes used different methods to provide access into the curricula for the students. In a grade one ICT class, with students learning English, the teacher provided two different graphic organizers for different students to meet their learning needs. Similarly, in a math class for students with special needs, one group was provided with tiles to help them demonstrate differing ways to demonstrate the number 18. Yet, in a kindergarten, science class, students were provided with models of the life cycle of the butterfly, but not all students received all the components. Additionally, in an ICT math class, students who were not part of the small group had trouble visualizing the size order of fractions and were unable to complete the question.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects for all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Impact

Through these engaging and rigorous curricula, the faculty builds coherence across grades and subjects and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Both faculty and administration stated that they build coherence using the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts to promote college and career readiness. The pacing of the curricula and posting of the flow of the day are in evidence school wide. There is an instructional focus on having students explore conflicting views, inference skills, argumentative writing, and solving complex mathematical problems. Professional development plans include learning activities for teachers to plan vertically and horizontally ensuring the development of engaging and rigorous tasks aligned to Common Core and the instructional shifts.
- The school adopted Common Core-aligned curricula including the *ReadyGen* program, but last year 75% of students tested had performed below grade level on the New York State (NYS) English Language Arts (ELA) assessment. The administration and staff decided to write their own balanced literacy curriculum. Afterward, the school was selected to participate in the “Chancellor’s Initiative of the *Teachers College* Principals as Curricular Leaders Program.” To this end, staff used and decided to adopt *Teachers College Reading and Writing Program* (TC). Based on an analysis of the state assessment results, staff has focused on text complexity using the TC writing units. The staff had adopted the *GO Math!* program for math. Approximately 60% of students performed below grade level on the New York State math assessment, so they decided to blend *GO Math!* with *EngageNY* to increase the level of rigor and problem solving. The *Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Intervention* series is used for struggling students. Additionally, the staff has made purposeful decisions to implement several computerized programs to support student learning for students who struggle with reading and writing. *Voyager*, *Raz Kids*, and the *Wilson* programs are used as additional supports for students. The *Voyage* program supports early childhood and *Raz Kids* is an online program used both in class and at home for beginning readers. Those students who are struggling receive Response to Intervention, both during and after school, through the *Wilson* reading program.
- Unit plans include big ideas, essential questions, Common Core Learning Standards, and a generic list of potential question stems and assessments. Lesson plans focus on the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Across grades and subjects, these plans include elements of the workshop model, such as, the statement of the teaching point, the small group or independent task, differentiation of groups, and formative assessment tools. Most lesson plans included planned scaffolding for ELLs, students with disabilities, and independent workers. Some plans include a mid-workshop interruption, guided reading, and conferences.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the curricula. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement is limited, and teachers inconsistently make effective teaching adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use rubrics and checklists to support students in knowing next steps, but students do not always know the best methods to use to improve their work. In student interviews throughout the day, some students knew how to use a rubric or checklist to support their learning and how to reflect on next steps. Although most student work receives a grade, or a checkmark, and often a congratulatory remark, often the work either received no score or received feedback but no score. One student shared an essay where the teacher graded it using a rubric, but the student did not receive feedback or the steps necessary to ensure improvement. Additionally, the feedback provided to students is not always understood and therefore, they do not know how to make improvements. Feedback provided a student for his narrative essay stated, "Work on grammar and spelling issues, and add more details." Yet, the student did not understand which grammatical issues and spelling to improve, or what type of details to add, thus, the feedback was neither meaningful nor actionable.
- Along with the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), teachers use *Fountas and Pinnell* (F&P) three times a year to assess students' reading levels. A data report compares the beginning of the year and the winter assessment with the results to the prior year's spring scores. However, analysis of this data to determine next steps for teaching and learning is lacking. Furthermore, although students have reading goals, these goals are omitted on this report, when asked, teachers did not provide evidence of growth toward goals for students, knowledge of trends, or how staff used the results of assessments to adjust instruction and curricula. In addition, there are grade rosters of students' comparative scores for the *F&P*, but lack how this data is used to inform daily curricular or pedagogical decisions. However, a few teachers did state that they use the *F&P* scores to inform guided reading groups.
- The use of checks for understanding and other formative assessments during teaching was uneven across classrooms. In a math class for students with special needs, the teacher asked questions, while the para-professionals were to record students' answers to guide the next day's lesson. This is a routine practice in this class. Yet, only two of the four para-professionals recorded students' responses. In a science grade five class, the teacher posed the question, "Can you give an example of aerobic exercise?" Although several students answered as they read the answers from the book, the teacher did not check for understanding but moved on to the next student, leaving others with missed opportunities to share their thinking. In a kindergarten science class, the teacher asked questions regarding the life cycle of the butterfly, such as, "What is that circle?" "What did the egg become?", and "What did the caterpillar become?" The teacher did not correct those who answered incorrectly, leaving some confused about the order of the lifecycle.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

**Impact**

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers who have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers consistently collaborate on their grade and English Language Arts team and meet on vertical teams as well. There is a vertical ELA team including the English as a New Language (ENL) teacher, and their focus is on planning and inquiry. Teachers have common planning time built into their schedules to meet for collaborative work during the school day and to engage in professional learning. A member of the fourth grade team stated that one of their major functions is to work on planning with the new, *Teachers College Reading and Writing Program*. The teachers spent time developing the learning objectives, set teaching points and the learning expectations for the end of the lessons. Teachers from other grades worked on the new program as well and presently are looking at student work, planning for the beginning of next year, and setting goals.
- A teacher team demonstrated the protocol for analyzing student work and data. Through this practice they determined the areas of need, created an action plan, discussed next instructional steps, and set a check-in date to review student performance. Team members stated that their function is to bridge the gap between second and third grades for a smooth transition for students. This endeavor is aligned to the school goal to achieve a one-point increase in students’ performance in the area of opinion writing.
- Teacher leaders facilitate the team meetings with the support and collaboration of its members. Teachers stated that sharing best practices has positively impacted their professional growth as they learn from each other. One teacher shared and others agreed, “We get to learn from each other and it continuously strengthens my practice.” Another teacher summed up the team’s comments by saying, “I think when we are in our classes we are in a vacuum and we air it out and listen to each other and use professional development to [support] our needs.” Teachers have a voice in creating and delivering professional development to their peers through the professional development team. The professional development team has met several times this year to collaborate and review the survey provided to staff, create the agendas for professional development sessions, and review the data to determine next steps for learning.