Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

PS 536

Elementary School X536

1827 Archer Street
Bronx
NY 10460

Principal: Sasha Medina

Date of review: May 11, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Clarence Williams

The School Context

PS 536 is an elementary school with 435 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 6% Asian, 20% Black, 71% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 21% 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 91.3%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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 *Framework for Teaching*, 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		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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

Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership.

Impact
Teachers are engaged in school-wide instructional coherence leading to increased student achievement for all learners. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school

Supporting Evidence

- A planning guide and protocol for peer interventions is a time allocated, multi-step procedure where teachers observe and provide feedback to each other. Some examples of objectives of the plan include, “How can I better engage my students during the mini-lesson?” and, “How can I get my students to use academic vocabulary in their writing?” Impact was seen as a grade 5 team used the protocol. The planning guide showed the observed teacher’s name, the date and time of the first inter-visitation, the focus, which in this example was “How can I encourage peer interaction?” The next section included the names of the observers. This procedure was repeated for four visits to the class. As an outgrowth of the process, the observations are followed up with peer suggestions and methodology to address the focus question. Subsequently, an additional follow-up will be to revisit to observe the practices and suggestions.

- Teachers provided evidence of inquiry-based collaborations that are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. In a Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) meeting, the agenda’s objective was to discuss improving a student’s writing by using clear and specific content and language and how to communicate those objectives to the student.

- A special education teacher created a review team, named the Individualized Education plan (IEP) team because there was a need to address the quality of the Individualized Education Plans. The review team is responsible for creating professional development on writing an IEP as well as being responsible for training all teachers on the IEP process. The review team impacts professional development for teachers of students with disabilities as well as general education teachers and turnkeys practices into the classroom. In another case, the School Leadership Team includes grade level leaders who are responsible for organizing intervisitations, professional growth of the team, and works with other school-based teams to write, adapt, and adjust curricula.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Teaching consistently provides multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact
Although students are engaged in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work products, this was not evident in the vast majority of the classes.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 1 class students were divided into homogeneous groups, novice/apprentice, practitioner, and expert, and provided multiple entry points into their task. The objective of the lesson was to make a graph based on collected data and answer questions about it. The novice group used a bear chart and used bears in different colors. Students had to fill in the blank to respond to how many bears in total, to the number in the various colors that were represented, and which color had the most bears. The practitioner group was working on creating a graph representing tornadoes. Students had to create a graph demonstrating the area that has more tsunamis and the area that has more tornadoes. Students collected their data by surveying other classmates. Grouping of students engaged in higher-order thinking skills was not evident in all classes observed.

- Across classrooms, students demonstrated higher order thinking skills. In a grade 2/3 self-contained class, the objective of the lesson was “Students will be able to recount stories including fables and folk tales from different cultures.” One group observed was working with the book *The Squires Bride*. Students read the fable with a partner and were answering the following questions, “Why did the squire want a wife? What did the squire promise the farmer?”, and, “Who tricked the squire?” Another group was observed reading in a small group, the fable *The Queen Ant’s Birthday.* The teacher front-loaded questions about the text, such as “Where do Ants live?”, “What do you call it when you have food and a blanket in the park?” After discussions revolving around elements of the text, students discussed why it was a big day at the ant house, and what ants do after they clean the nest.

- In a kindergarten class, during small group instruction, students were observed using the interactive white board to match rhyming sounds. Another group was matching letters to pictures, while other students were observed reading the book, *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse*. A fourth group was doing a writing exercise called “Read it, Build it, Write it.” In all groups, students led discussions using graphic organizers and engaged in brainstorming. In the same class, the teacher used the book *Look at the Web*, for students to make predictions. For example, “How does the lady look when she sees the spider? Let’s predict what will she do?” Students independently discussed their answers.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

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

Impact
School leaders make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership provided an example of an adjusted grade 3 writing unit that included the instruction shift of writing from sources. The theme in the original curriculum was "Continuation of Diversity and Community." Teachers felt that the curriculum did not address the need for students to build independence in writing; therefore, the revised unit targeted one country and included frequent quick writes, unlike the original unit that required students to work on one piece of writing over the course of the entire unit. The impact was seen in student writing samples. One student writing sample displayed more detail in an opinion piece on why Italy is interesting. The teacher stated that the smaller writing assignments help build stamina and allow the teacher to assess interim progress.

- A grade 2/3 self-contained class lesson plan demonstrated a guided reading lesson. The lesson stated that students were required to read a book with a partner on the same reading level and engage in discussion. Using Common Core Learning Standards in English Language Arts/Literacy, the lesson plan stated that students will compare and contrast two stories and write about the differences and use a Venn diagram to record the differences.

- Based upon student data and authentic student work, teachers' planning evidences that they provide access into the curriculum to cognitively engage ELLs and students with disabilities. In a unit on informational and opinion writing on New York City's five boroughs, scaffolds are designed for both sub-groups. Examples include, increased font size, pre-teaching key vocabulary words, and vocabulary word walls with pictures. In a grade 5 geometry unit, English Language Learners and students with disabilities have access to geometry activity cards to reinforce the lesson. English Language Learners utilize vocabulary word walls with pictures, sentence stems, and pre-teaching key vocabulary words. Students with disabilities also have sentence stems incorporated into the unit as well as kinesthetic engagement and work breaks.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies, that are aligned with the school's curricula. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of student self-assessment.

Impact
Teachers and students use various methods to provide actionable feedback. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and students use "Clicks and Clunks" to assess student academic performance. Clicks represent comprehension, and clunks represent areas that students are struggling with. Examples of feedback using these cards were demonstrated in student writing samples. The chart was divided into three categories: self, peer, and teacher. The students click read, "I like my drawings." The peer assessment for the click read, "I like how you drew it piece by piece", and the teacher assessment read, "Great job starting your summary with a topic sentence." The clunks for the self-assessment stated, "I think I can do better on giving details". The peer assessment read. "You did not color in all the stuff", and the clunk for the teacher read, "Remember to add periods and transition words to connect your ideas."

- In a grade 1 math assignment the teacher used a glow and grow chart to provide teacher-to-student feedback. It stated, "You're glowing in finding so many correct ways to represent the number 25. Let's grow in selecting a harder number to work with to challenge yourself."

- Rubrics were used in all classrooms observed to assess student performance. Rubrics reviewed included a writing rubric addressing Common Core Learning standard for writing, a kindergarten fairytale rubric for writing, and a grade 5 math development rubric aligning the standards to novice, apprentice, practitioner, and expert. An example of the writing rubric was evident in a grade 3 class. The student was an apprentice in details/elaboration, a practitioner in purpose, voice and tone, and conventions of standard English, and an expert in organization. Teachers have stated that the rubrics were impactful to student performance. This is evident in the growth report provided by a grade 3 English Language Arts (ELA) teacher that demonstrated her class moving from 2.5 in October to 3.5 in April in their grade equivalent, representing a year of progress.

- A kindergarten class exhibited a self-reflection sheet using stars. Four stars represented great, three represented good, two represented working on it, and one represented "I can do better." This was evident in a classroom that posted a writing checklist that stated, "Check your work, can you get four stars?"

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to families that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact
School leaders offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward expectations and offer ongoing and detailed guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for the next level

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers send out quarterly benchmark goals to parents. The kindergarten goal in reading and writing is categorized by month from November to June. An example for June includes “Independently read on level E/F”, and “Recall and discuss key details about a text.” Writing goals in June included, “Leave spaces between words” and, “Write a simple story that has a beginning middle and end.” These goals are given to parents and students, and discussed so that parents are aware of the critical skills their children must have to prepare for the next grade.

- The instructional team on every grade level sends out a document entitled “Summary of Curriculum and Experiences.” The document highlights what is required of students to move to the next level. This is shared with students and their families. The grade 5 instructional team’s publication lists “Milestone experiences” such as researching and applying for middle school, overnight college trips, and taking on school leadership responsibilities. The document also lists key concepts in English Language Arts and math that must be mastered, including research and information writing, analytical essay writing, dividing whole numbers, and converting units of measure. This is designed to ensure that students are fully aware of what is expected of them

- Teachers send out a weekly homework sheet log to parents. The log includes special announcements and reminders and a section for parents to express any concerns comments or questions. An example of a grade 1 log was provided that reminded parents that homework is given every night, an upcoming math test, a spelling test, and the times the teacher is available. In the space provided for parents to comment, a parent mentioned that they would like to help on the next trip. The teacher responded, “That would be fine.”