Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Jose De Diego

Elementary School 84

250 Berry Street
Brooklyn
NY 11249

Principal: Sereida Rodriguez-Guerra

Date of review: October 30, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

The School Context

Jose De Diego is an elementary and intermediate school with 616 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 3% Black, 62% Hispanic, 28% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.3%.

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**	**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 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	**Celebration**	**Well Developed**
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	**Additional Findings**	**Well Developed**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction and create opportunities for professional learning and support. The school partners with families to support student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact
The school's supportive structures to achieve high expectations result in a culture of mutual accountability for student progress and improved teacher practices.

Supporting Evidence
- Regular teacher study groups and training opportunities underpin the school-wide expectations for improved instruction that are guided by the professional learning plan aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) and are centered on student engagement strategies, the use of assessments for instruction, and collaborative inquiry.

- Frequent classroom observations and regular walkthroughs, followed with timely feedback, combined with the use of the Dropbox, an online document sharing system, by all staff members for planning and collaborative work sustain a culture of mutual accountability for expectations.

- Recurrent parent workshops, monthly grade level newsletters and periodic report cards clearly outline the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts that emphasize critical and analytical thinking and problem solving using the constructivist approach.

- Teachers and leaders regularly communicate with parents about the goals for units of study and provide families with actionable next steps and ongoing feedback on their students' progress.

- Families regularly provide input on academic and enrichment programs and participate in creating a shared vision of the school. Parents are instrumental in promoting student leadership in extracurricular clubs and in providing these workshops, including the arts, sports, and fashion design that are offered in 6-8 week cycles. They also partake in the revision of school goals and recently supported the school's grade expansion.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

While pedagogy, anchored in common beliefs, provides consistent instructional supports, including scaffolds and questioning, the use of strategic extensions that foster higher order thinking demonstrated in rigorous student work and discussions varies across the school.

Impact

Across classrooms, multiple access points support student engagement in rigorous tasks and discussions, yet there are some missed opportunities for all learners to demonstrate critical and analytical thinking and high levels of participation.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers regularly re-examine their belief system about how students learn best after conducting instructional rounds and develop a shared understanding of student engagement which is informed by the DfT and ongoing discussions in various teams.

- During a math lesson in grade 6, students worked in groups and discussed, in both Spanish and English, the order of operations using relevant vocabulary and concepts scaffolded by teacher modeling, word walls and prompts for discussion. Teachers in classrooms visited provided small group instruction, manipulatives and guided practice.

- While conversations with students indicated that they consistently work in groups and are provided with graphic organizers, visuals, and discussion prompts, extensions to the lessons did not fully engage higher achieving students. Classroom visits revealed that although all students are engaged in discussions about tasks, early finishers have limited opportunities to extend their thinking beyond the assignment.

- Teachers in the vast majority of classes engage students in partner or group discussions to critique each other's work and give feedback, yet in some classes those discussions are still teacher-centered.

- In one math class students worked in groups and discussed and asked questions to interpret data in graphs based on real-life contexts and surveys, yet the extensions to learning did not allow students to make deeper connection between the concepts and real world application extending their thinking beyond the task.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous tasks and units of study are refined by inquiry teams based on the analysis of student work.

Impact

The school's strategic curricular decisions result in coherence promoting college and career readiness for all students across grades and subjects. Multiple access points are regularly planned to cognitively engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Units of study in all grades emphasize the following shifts to prepare students to be successful at the next level: writing from sources, balancing informational and literary texts, and building academic vocabulary in literacy and across content areas, and deep understanding of real world application in mathematics.

- Across grades and subjects, teachers plan writing units in literacy that are aligned with reading units from the Ready Gen core curriculum program. A standards-based grade 1 unit on personal narrative, for example, is entitled, "Reading and Writing to Learn."

- The school further promotes college and career readiness by embedding the writing process and written problem solving explanations across grades and subjects.

- All teacher teams use a protocol that includes next steps, engagement and scaffolding strategies, goals and revisions for week-long lessons, and formative assessments.

- Scaffolding strategies such as guided think-aloud and graphic organizers are among many tools listed in unit and lesson plans for supporting access for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
While teachers use common assessments aligned to curricula in all subjects and consistently track student progress, effective use of on-going checks for understanding varies across classrooms.

Impact
The school's use of assessment analysis results in actionable feedback to teachers and students and in refinements of curricula and monitoring student progress, yet day-to-day adjustments to lessons sometimes miss opportunities to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence
- The school utilizes common assessments, including rubrics and checklists, in all content areas. All literacy and math units of study include pre-and post-assessments. In ELA, for example, two performance tasks, in reading and in writing, are strategically built-in to monitor student progress.

- Classroom visits and meetings with teachers and students revealed that feedback on student work includes next steps. Students say that teachers confer with them and give them strategies how to improve.

- Across grade levels, teachers monitor student progress toward unit goals and adjust curricular decisions and grouping for learning. The school monitors progress of sub-groups and teacher teams analyze relevant student achievement data.

- Teachers give students opportunities to reflect and self-assess their work. In most classrooms we visited, students were engaged in peer-assessment and used self-reflection forms and checklists to give peer feedback. In one classroom, for example, students were discussing their completion of tasks and providing each other with feedback using the expectations of the rubric. In another class, students reflected on their projects by completing reviews inclusive of one thing they enjoyed learning and another they needed to improve.

- While classroom visits and interviews with teachers and students indicated that the school uses on-going assessments to group students and adjust weekly unit plans, teachers do not fully utilize checks for understanding to make immediate adjustments in daily lessons.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

All teachers are engaged in robust and collaborative inquiry-based professional learning teams and study groups. Embedded leadership structures encourage teachers' voice in key decisions from planning curricula to improving practices and student achievement.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in a school-wide shift toward student-centered instruction and coherence leading to higher academic achievement. Teachers are empowered to play an integral role in impacting student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- A grade 1 team, for example, chose their inquiry study after surfacing gaps based on the state assessment in the 3rd grade and by asking a question, "Can peer evaluations help students become more reflective writers?"

- All grade levels consistently use protocols for looking at student work. ELA units of study, for example, are refined and adjusted to improve content writing and skills. Teachers state they collaboratively plan and refine curriculum in order to emphasize the instructional shifts and strengthen the alignment with the Common Core.

- Student work on bulletin boards and in portfolios demonstrates increased mastery of informational writing across the grades. For example, students in all grades cite evidence from two or more sources in their short and long written responses. In a dual-language class students compared and contrasted bats and owls using their Spanish skills in writing.

- Teacher teams make decisions about implications for instruction and communicate their findings and noticings with colleagues across grades and subjects. Teachers, for example, share strategies and plan tasks for engaging students in group discussions to solve real world problems in math. Grade 4 and 5 students meet their problem solving goals by showing their work with detailed explanations of how they arrived at their answers.

- Meetings with teacher teams revealed that they use study groups to build pedagogical capacity, schedule peer visits and make decisions about professional development and instruction. Teachers lead a school-wide instructional initiative to build student persistence and to improve writing through peer feedback and discussions.