



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Newport School

Elementary-Middle School K184

**273 Newport Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Lisa Caldwell Linder

**Date of review: May 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

The Newport School is an elementary-intermediate school with 551 students from grade pre K through grade 8. The school population comprises 73% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 21% 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 88.0%.

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	Focus	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	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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administrators convey high expectations to all staff and families, with multiple support structures in place to help them meet the expectations. Communication with families includes information about college and career readiness goals for all students.

Impact

Effective communication of expectations, along with targeted supports for all staff and families to collaborate in improving teaching and learning, has created accountability for progress in meeting expectations and achieving goals.

Supporting Evidence

- A staff handbook and weekly memoranda are among the tools used to communicate high expectations to all staff. A weekly newsletter, “The Linder Ledger” and a “Weekly Updates” handout inform all staff of deadlines and expectations linked to the targeted components of the Danielson Framework, the school’s instructional focus and weekly professional development activities. Data reporting sheets and templates for analyzing student work further specify the expectations related to teachers’ approach to planning and teaching. Teachers shared that they are expected to create a student centered classroom environment, collaborate on best practices to improve their pedagogy and implement differentiated instruction that improves achievement by all students. Administrators use conference notes, reviews of unit and daily lesson plans, feedback from observations, analyses of student work and other data to hold staff accountable for meeting these expectations.
- The school’s professional development plan reveals that all teachers receive ongoing training in both planning and delivering rigorous instruction and implementing social-emotional learning initiatives. Along with training in topics such as effective questioning and using assessment in instruction, teachers receive training to implement a Positive Behavior Intervention Support program designed to improve students’ social emotional learning skills across grades. Through grade team meetings, staff conferences, study groups and inter-visitations, including visits to a host school as part of the Learning Partners’ Program, teachers are supported by peers, including model teachers, coaches and administrators, in planning lessons that align to school wide instructional expectations.
- A monthly family calendar and grade specific newsletter communicate to parents, the school’s expectations for their children’s academic achievement and personal development. Parents stated that expectations are also outlined via letters sent home, as well as through phone calls and emails from teachers. One parent added that the school sends invitations for families to visit the school to review their child’s progress, via one to one meetings with the teacher on Tuesdays and invites families to attend monthly “Rap” sessions facilitated by the Parent Coordinator on Saturdays. All families can also access *MyOn*, an online program, to check on their children’s progress towards the school’s expectations, including the expectation that all students read “at least 30 books”. Further, information sessions on transitions to the next grade and/or high school, and workshops on math, homework, and Common Core Standards, further support the bridge from school to home and link day to day school experiences to college and career readiness skills.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Staff members work collaboratively to ensure that all students have access to Common Core-aligned curricula with tasks linked to the instructional shifts. Strategic use of student work and data to further refine curricula and tasks is not yet clearly evident across all content areas and grades.

Impact

The school's engagement with ongoing review and modification of curricula does not yet result in all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, having access to units of study with academic tasks in all content areas, to accelerate their progress towards college and career readiness skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Common Core aligned curricula such as *GO Math!* for grades k-5, and *CMP3 math* for grades 6-8. For literacy instruction, teachers use *ReadyGEN* for grades k-5 and *Code X* for grades 6-8. Concept Boards in classrooms and hallways offer brief overviews of content, skills, topics, and unit activities linked to *ReadyGEN* and *Go Math!* curricula. Curricula also include units of instruction for Cook Shop which is offered to students in grades k-2, and computer science programming, based on curricula from an online website, known as "code.org". Integration of the instructional shifts to further align tasks from the selected curricula to content standards in areas such as science and social studies, was not noted in instructional plans, particularly for students in the upper grades.
- To supplement the curricula the school utilizes technology based reading and math programs. For example *My On*, an online literacy program, offers students in grades 2-8 access to high interest and leveled collections of enhanced digital books which are used to support guided and independent reading. In addition, *Imagine Learning*, a phonics-based program, is used to build early literacy skills for students in the lower grades. Further, collections of texts are integrated into instructional units from the *ReadyGEN program*.
- The principal stated that *Go Math!* is used to supplement instruction for some sixth grade students who are well below their grade level. Similarly, for some fourth grade students with disabilities, Wilson reading strategies are infused in instructional plans linked to the Ready Gen curriculum. Minutes of some team meetings show that teacher teams conduct analysis of baseline assessments and review student work samples in adjusting content or pacing of units. However, teacher use of student work and data to customize tasks to support full access to curricula for individual and groups of students, such as highest and lowest achieving students and English language learners and students with disabilities, was not sufficiently evident in instructional plans.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across all grades and subjects, teaching practices consistently provide all students with opportunities to participate in discussions and tasks that push their thinking.

Impact

Consistent engagement of all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in challenging tasks, result in high quality work products and high levels of student participation in discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers engaged students in challenging tasks, such as reading texts to cite evidence and using academic vocabulary to explain solutions to problems. For example, in a fifth grade social studies class groups of students engaged in interpreting primary source documents to explore “major issues associated with the Civil War”. They shared thinking with each other and then with the whole class, using academic vocabulary (confederacy, emancipation) and citing evidence from the documents as well as from the text, *Heart and Soul*. In addition, kindergarten students were asked to identify and distinguish between a noun and an adjective, by looking around the room, articulating examples of nouns (boy, girl, book) and listing adjectives to describe each (short, tall, good).
- In most classrooms visited, all students worked on differentiated group tasks and in some cases with differentiated levels of support but most teachers did not provide additional activities or extensions of tasks for the most advanced learners. In an eighth grade science class all students sat in groups, reading an excerpt of text to analyze how the mass of an object is related to force during a collision. A few students struggled with the reading while others quickly read their part”. According to the principal, the school is working to further elevate student engagement via additional attention to more rigorous tasks for all students.
- The principal indicated that there is a school-wide focus on student-to-student discussion grounded in evidence from texts. This was illustrated in most classrooms, including a sixth grade math class where students worked in small groups to solve problems about mean, median and mode. They used a Smart Board to demonstrate the groups’ solution, fielded questions from peers and clarified the rationale for their answers. Similarly, in an eighth grade English language arts class the teacher used literature circles to engage students in high level discussions of responses from individual, paired and small groups of peers, all of whom worked on differentiated tasks (finding theme, summarizing reading, character analysis) with differentiated resources (novels, audio books, MyOn online books, focus questions, task sheets). Students used a “Literature Circle Rubric”, an “Evaluation Assessment” document, “Meeting Log, Group Study Record” and “Self- Assessment Rubric” in engaging discussions of the tasks.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Data from a range of assessments provides staff and students with information about students' performance. Teachers engage in ongoing assessment of students' learning and support students in self and peer assessment through consistent use of checks for understanding.

Impact

Teachers' and students' sharing of feedback from assessment data results in the identification of learning needs and adjustments that address them. Ongoing assessment of students' learning, including peer and self-assessment by students, creates student awareness of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- An assessment calendar indicates a variety of formal and informal assessments which measure students' proficiency and content knowledge related to varied performance tasks across grades and content areas. Assessments include beginning, middle and end of year *Go Math!* assessments, *CMP3 math* assessments, math baseline assessments for students in grades 3-8, Fall and Spring benchmarks in English language arts and math, with Fountas and Pinnell assessments administered in October, December and March. End of unit and Performance Based Assessments linked to *Ready GEN* and *Code X*, along with a Performance Based Assessment for students in grades k-2, provide additional data about students' performance and progress.
- Teachers use a school wide grading policy, task-specific rubrics, and checklists aligned to curricula, to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines. Students' folders contained rubrics such as a "Literature Circle Discussion Rubric", an "Oral Presentation Rubric", a "Rubric for Assessing Student Participation, Peer Assessment Rubric, Science Notebook Rubric", and a checklist for assessing group work. Further, the student work samples showed rubric based comments attached to the work, providing feedback including next steps, to improve the work. A variety of rubrics were also seen on bulletin boards in classrooms and hallways. All students interviewed were able to articulate how they use rubrics in their classes for peer and self-assessment of their performance.
- Classroom teachers demonstrated use of varied methods of ongoing checks for understanding during instruction. During classroom visits, most teachers engaged in discussions of "Do Nows" and asked individual students to re-state the day's "Learning Objective", with direct questioning followed by hand signals (thumbs up, thumbs down) from students, to confirm whether they understood the task. In the majority of classes, teachers also engaged in check-ins via group or one-to-one conferencing and / or reviews of classwork, to monitor students' understanding during lessons. As an example, In a fourth grade science class the teacher conferenced around the room to check on students' understanding as they used a worksheet with "Critical Thinking Prompts" to record "Properties of Matter" from their examination of objects such as M&M candy and rocks.

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

All teachers take part in structured professional collaborations focused on instructional goals, including the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Distributed management structures support the development of teacher leadership and provide teachers with a voice in key decisions.

Impact

Collaborative structures empower all teachers to support school goals, resulting in improved teacher practice and progress towards student mastery of performance standards. The promotion of teacher leadership has led to increased teacher input in high level school decision-making that improves student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff members are programmed for weekly common planning sessions and are members of Professional Learning Communities where they share best practices for improving student learning through improved instruction. Teamwork during common planning periods is structured via cycles of inquiry based activities that reflect a specific weekly area of focus. Team members “cycle” through monthly activities labeled as, “Week 1 - Data, Week 2 - Danielson Framework, Week 3 - Looking at Student Work and Week 4 - Curriculum”. Teachers stated that through these activities they regularly engage in targeted inquiry work and contribute to administrative decisions such as selection of materials for instruction and professional development.
- Minutes of teams meetings show staff use of a variety of protocols to structure meetings. During team meetings teachers use a “Looking at Student Work” protocol to identify gaps in instruction and determine next steps based on their findings. With support from administrators, network coaches, two school based data specialists and other teacher leaders, all teachers work collaboratively to chart next steps for improving student mastery of Common Core aligned goals and expectations. An example of this was observed during one teacher team meeting, where the teachers used a “Looking at Student Work-What Comes Up?” protocol to examine samples of seventh grade students’ work on “coordinates and translations of shapes in math”. They discussed strengths and gaps in the work and articulated next steps, such as adding tasks for “more practice in ordering pairs /coordinates” and more emphasis on students’ need to “label x versus y axis”.
- In addition to being members of grade teams, several teacher leaders participate in the Department of Education’s Learning Partners Program. They visit host schools to view best practices, meet regularly with administrators, plan professional development activities and facilitate inter-visitations for peers. Model teachers develop and facilitate professional development for peers, to heighten student engagement in learning. Other staff members hold leadership roles such as data specialist, instructional coach and/or member of a curriculum team and the principal’s cabinet. According to the principal, teacher collaborations in and outside of the school have improved teacher practice, with more and more teacher leaders hosting peer inter-visitations. An increase in student achievement is evidenced by the latest Fountas and Pinnell data.