



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Robert L. Stevenson School

Elementary School M183

**419 East 66th Street
Manhattan
NY 10065**

Principal: Tara Napoleoni

Date of review: March 31, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Lucia Perez-Medina

The School Context

Robert L. Stevenson is an elementary school with 589 students from grades kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 10% Hispanic, 64% White, and 19% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.0%.

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	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations of the Danielson's Framework for Teaching to staff and successfully partners with families to communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

These structures have resulted in a culture of mutual accountability among all stakeholders and increased student progress towards expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate expectations to staff through verbal and written structures like Weekly Notes-by administration, new teacher orientation, staff handbook, on-going workshops, teacher meetings, and by working with study group teams and all professional development sessions.
- The school organizes ongoing events for families to communicate high expectations. Some events are: math mornings; publishing celebrations that highlight writing process; Parent-Teacher association (PTA) meetings with an instructional focus; the school's quarterly newsletter called *The 183 Times*. In addition, teachers send newsletters and have websites to share information/resources with students and families. The principal holds, "Tea with Tara" throughout the school year to share current initiatives and increase parental involvement. They also provide regular updates in the weekly update and quarterly newsletter. Throughout the year, the focus on is instructional topics in these publications. In addition, they use videos to increase their parent workshop audience and build the capacity to meet the demand of home-school resources. These videos are available on the school's website.
- During the parent interview, parents expressed that the School Leadership Team (SLT) team partners with families to bring the school goals to real-life by hosting events where "real-world" writers and mathematicians visit classrooms for students to interview. Parents stated that this connects to student understanding of the big ideas and connections to college and career readiness. Parents also stated that the weekly before-school morning math league that is facilitated by the math coach and more than twenty parent volunteers further challenges students in grades three to five.
- Students in grade five are departmentalized. During the teacher interview, teachers explained that this provides a dynamic learning experience where the students build independence by rotating to different classrooms for each subject area. Teacher's also expressed that parents were happy with this approach since it fosters independence to prepare students for college and career readiness. One teacher stated, "This initiative has allowed us to teach into middle school expectations, such as managing multiple teachers and organization while in a familiar environment".

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Assessment practices are aligned to the school's curricula and incorporate use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment; however, there are some missed opportunities for students to receive effective feedback to accelerate their next learning steps.

Impact

Assessment data provides teachers with feedback on students' performance across most subject areas. Although most teachers address immediate needs of individuals or groups of students to accelerate their learning, a few students receive limited feedback in some subject areas hindering student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers plan based on analyses of student work and on information they have on individual students. Across most classrooms visited, teachers were doing frequent check-ins, giving targeted feedback, creating small learning groups that target skills and providing opportunities for students to self-assess their work.
- Most students shared how they used the rubrics attached to their writing pieces as feedback regarding what they did well and how they could improve their work. One student stated, "I need to use more details in my writing". Three students pointed out that their rubrics help them see what their next steps are in writing, while three students could not articulate their next learning steps in mathematics. A review of student work revealed limited actionable feedback across some subject areas, particularly science and mathematics.
- In most classrooms visited, formative assessment practices were strategically embedded in daily lessons via questioning, sharing of ideas from group or partner work and exit slips providing for immediate feedback on student mastery of content and skills related to learning goals. Most teachers were observed using a checklist to track student learning.
- During the student meeting, students articulated that they get feedback from their peers and that teachers give them feedback in their reading notebooks. One student stated, "I use a checklist for writing so I can see what I need to do better." However, a few students could not articulate their strengths and next steps for learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The schools' curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and offers meaningful learning experiences that promote higher-order skills to improve student learning.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. The theme-based units of study challenge student thinking across grades.

Supporting Evidence

- In mathematics, teachers have created supplements to the current TERC Investigations curriculum to align it with the Common Core standards. Additionally, teachers have implemented modules from Engage NY Math to increase math fluency and deepen understanding. Teachers work with the math coach to develop tasks that require students to apply their content knowledge and engage in discussion that deepens understanding.
- In literacy, teachers use *Teacher' College Reading and Writing Project* units of study in reading and writing which are Common Core aligned. Teachers work with both Teacher's College (TC) consultants and the literacy coach to examine the reading and writing progressions and create and modify tasks that are accessible to all learners.
- The social studies and science curricula are aligned to the scope and sequence. Science focuses on process skills including conducting experiments/investigations, making observations, and developing scientific theories. Social studies focus on research and analysis skills by examining primary and secondary sources and thinking skills (comparing/contrasting, drawing conclusions).
- Coherence is developed in writing through units that focus on a planned deliberate sequence of learning. Learning is paced and developed throughout the year in kindergarten to grade 5 through writing bends that teach introductory, intermediate and advanced writing units for each text type.

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

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to a set of beliefs that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and discussions foster higher-order thinking and learning.

Impact

Most students including ELLs and SWDs engage in challenging academic tasks and demonstrate their thinking in discussions and work products. Hands-on and collaborative learning structures predominate across classrooms based on the articulated school beliefs.

Supporting Evidence

- In keeping with the school's belief of how students learn best, across most classrooms visited, students engaged in partner work, small group instruction, and independent practice. During a grade one lesson, students participated in small groupings where they had opportunities to demonstrate their thinking by sharing their character's point of view and by providing proof using supportive text-based evidence.
- During classroom observations, the use of turn and talk, group talk, ability-based grouping, and modeling and graphic organizers were observed in literacy and social studies. For example, in a grade three class, students worked in groups to identify how a character changes by describing character's traits at the beginning and end of a story and provide evidence from the text to support the traits described and complete a graphic organizer. Students had access to leveled texts and had the opportunity to discuss their evidence with their peers.
- In the kindergarten class, as part of the science unit, students explored similarities and differences between their plants and discussed their observations. Students were grouped based on their needs. The teacher met with the English language learners (ELLs) and provided vocabulary cards and pictures to support their learning. Another group completed a T chart and the advanced group used a venn diagram to compare the plants. Through partnerships, leveled materials on the same topic, introduction of vocabulary and teacher support students are able to access the curriculum.
- Station teaching was observed in a grade four Integrated-Co Teaching (ICT) class. One group worked on comparing fractions greater than 1 by reasoning using fractions on a number line while another group worked on applying what they have been learning within the fraction unit by playing a game called More or Less. Students had to compare cards to benchmark fractions and use a number line to explain to their partner what they believe and why. Another group wrote a short response to an analysis question by stating a claim and using two details to support their thinking. Students had access to a mentor example and students discussed their responses in partnerships. Another group engaged in an independent reading task and engaged in a stop and jot activity and discussed their learning in partnerships.

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

Findings

Teacher teams are engaged in structured professional collaborations and regularly analyze student work through an inquiry approach. Teachers benefit from a variety of distributed leadership opportunities to research effective instructional techniques and play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

Impact

Teacher team collaboration builds distributed leadership capacity and strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- There are multiple opportunities for teachers to engage in professional collaborations. Grade level teacher teams meet monthly for literacy and monthly for math. These meetings are facilitated by the math or literacy coach and grade team leaders. Monday professional development alternates weekly between study groups and a “professional choice” where teacher teams select from a menu of options such as unit planning, child study or materials making. Teachers submit proposals to lead study groups, volunteer to facilitate Parent Teacher Association meetings and host visitors to showcase best practices.
- During the grade one meeting, teachers used a protocol to facilitate the meeting and analyzed the results from an initial assessment from the unit *Reading across Genres to Learn about a Topic*. Team members analyzed three student responses and normed an understanding of expectations. Then in partnerships, teachers continued reviewing student work using a checklist to determine student’s strengths and needs. They reviewed student’s ability to identify genre correctly, use appropriate text features to get information and identify key details. They planned to meet again to discuss next steps to support these students.
- During both teacher meetings, teachers expressed that they have many opportunities to collaborate and share best instructional strategies; strengthening instructional capacity and impacting student outcomes. For example, teachers stated that during their monthly literacy meetings they engage in a structured process of studying strategies that deepen engagement, strengthen retention and increase independence for all students and try the strategies learned with their students and reflect on the effectiveness of those strategies in supporting their learners.
- Teachers take on leadership roles in both formal and informal ways. Teachers are a point-person for a content area on their grade to increase vertical planning and facilitation of professional planning. Integrated Co-Teaching classroom teachers across all grades meet bi-weekly during common planning time to vertically plan and collaborate. Monthly staff “share-outs” is one place for teachers to briefly present a current success. Often teachers are invited to share based on something the administration notices/learns during an observation. Teachers learn from each other and use resources, such as progressions and checklists that promote the Common Core Standards and the instructional shifts and use forums, such as inter-visitations, lab-sites, and learning walks as structures to align teacher practice and assess the impact of their initiatives.