



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 086 Kingsbridge Heights

Elementary School X086

**2756 Reservoir Avenue
Bronx
NY 10468**

Principal: Fiona Tyson

**Date of review: May 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone**

The School Context

P.S. 086 Kingsbridge Heights is an elementary school with 1655 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade six. The school population comprises 10% Black, 85% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

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	Celebration	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	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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

All curricula are standards-aligned with an emphasis on the instructional shifts and higher-order skills in a coherent way across grades and subject areas.

Impact

All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are exposed to higher level tasks that are embedded across grades and subjects allowing students to demonstrate their thinking, thus leading to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers can articulate how curricula, across and within grade levels, are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards to promote college and career readiness for all students from kindergarten to fifth grade. For example, after being read to, students across grades responded to a prompt by engaging in discussion with partners. This was followed by a written response in their journals regarding the book of the month. Each writing prompt became increasingly demanding depending on the student's performance and grade level. Exemplars of the expectations for each grade were displayed throughout the building.
- The school has established a practice of integrating the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts through an Understanding by Design (UbD) approach to unit planning across grades and subject areas. Units include standards-aligned enduring understandings, big ideas, essential questions, and unit goals in the form of instructional objectives. For example, a fourth grade literacy unit on biographies and a sixth grade social studies unit on classical civilizations in the eastern hemisphere are designed using the same principles.
- Higher order skills are embedded throughout curricula and supports and extensions are provided for struggling students, English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and higher level students so that students can take and support positions, use and adapt what they know and demonstrate their thinking in new learning situations. A fourth grade writing task included specific graphic organizers to support struggling writers to brainstorm, develop, connect, and organize ideas into a writing piece. A second grade task for ELLs included trans-languaging strategies to write in either English or Spanish as they built ideas from multiple texts. A kindergarten task on writing about an animal from a story included providing pictures with labels, and pictures to sequence onto a graphic organizer for students with disabilities so they could write about how the animal chose its home and why the animal chose to have it. A third grade math lesson included a "Think Deeper Challenge" for higher level students.
- To maximize rigorous thinking in math, teachers use a "Thinking through a Performance Task" protocol to plan questions, anticipate misconceptions, and extend learning through the constructive struggle process. Teachers identified anticipated possible correct solutions with varied strategies, extension questions, and solution paths to share during class discussion.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across the school, teachers use common assessments and rubrics to provide feedback to students and check for understanding as well as provide opportunities for students to assess their own work. Yet, feedback that is meaningful is inconsistent.

Impact

Although the school uses common assessments include checks for understanding in lessons, and provide actionable feedback that result in teachers determining student progress towards goals and adjusting instruction, meaningful feedback is inconsistently used to promote greater student initiative to progress towards the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics and checklists are used throughout all grades across classrooms and subject areas. Most students understand the use of the tools to inform their learning and next steps. Some feedback is meaningful and actionable. One teacher wrote, "Next time, add more details to your drawing, label, and use more colors to convey what you wrote. Also, refer to the word wall and vocabulary we went through in class to make sure you spell words like "bouquet" correctly." However, to a fourth grade student the teacher wrote, "Next time, let's try to have a balance between fantasy and reality." Another fourth grade student received, "Next time, let's be careful with run-on sentences." with no comments on development of ideas or organization of writing. In many cases, students received a circled rubric with no comments.
- Using rubrics and checklists, students across classrooms engage in self-reflection. Following a math task, a third grader wrote, "I can represent data on a line plot (and) calculate elapsed time on a number line. I have trouble using critical thinking to divide or subtract problems measuring liquid volume. I have trouble measuring to the nearest $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. I will continue to reread my own math work and check every answer with a different strategy to make sure I arrive at the correct solution so I can score a 4 on my next performance task." Students take writing conference observation notes. Included in her notes, a fourth grade student wrote, "I have mastered... details from text ... Need to add more vocabulary words."
- Across classrooms, teachers engage in checks for understanding, which include circulating, annotating, and questioning. In a sixth grade math class the teacher selected students to demonstrate a process rather than answer students' questions so that students could learn from each other through explanations. In a fifth grade class, the teacher interrupted the class when she noted that students were struggling with perspective to reiterate a definition and solicit examples from students. She asked them to incorporate what they had learned and noticed into their writing pieces. The school is progressing towards embedding checks for understanding that lead to effective on-the-spot lesson adjustments to meet all students' learning needs in a vast majority of classes so that students are aware of their next learning steps.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices consistently reflect school-wide beliefs about how students learn best supported by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Student discussion and work products reflect high levels of student thinking.

Impact

Students are actively engaged in classroom activities and discussions resulting in meaningful work products leading to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers articulated a set of beliefs about how students learn best that include discussion and engagement. This was evident across classrooms visited. In a first grade class, students were asked to put sixteen apples into bowls where each bowl must have the same number of apples. A child in one group postulated to his tablemates, "I'm thinking 4 because $4+4+4+4$ equals 16." His friends had other solutions and they exchanged ideas. In a sixth grade math class, students in small groups were tasked with figuring out how to paint a room using all of the required materials for less than \$50. After one group presented at the SMARTboard, the teacher asked the class, "What did they do that you didn't do?" When the second group presented, the teacher asked the presenters to explain the mistake they had made. Students were engaged in learning from each other through their successes and mistakes.
- Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect the instructional shifts. In a second grade literacy class, students were asked to identify text evidence regarding Johnny Appleseed's impact on our country. In a fourth grade Integrated Collaborative Team-teaching (ICT) class, students worked in groups to figure out how many camels and how many ostriches there were in a zoo based on the zookeeper's statement that among the animals there were 86 feet. In both cases, students were engaged in a student-centered class where discussion was a key activity, making real-life connections in response to Common Core-aligned tasks.
- In most classrooms, there were opportunities for students to engage in tasks that required them to work in pairs or groups using academic vocabulary and accountable talk stems. In a third grade math class, students discussed the strategies they used for figuring out how many chaperones they would need for a class of 25 students on a trip with groups of two, three, or four students and show all different possibilities thus demonstrating conceptual understanding of the problem and the task. Students in a third grade reading class discussed the different books they were reading and made connections to each other's books based on specific task cards. Students challenged each other's thinking by asking their group mates to provide evidence to support their answers and reasons and made connections to real life.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional development opportunities. Training and performance updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

The school has established a culture of mutual accountability and staff takes ownership of improving pedagogical practice and crafting partnerships with parents that result in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Through written communication and professional development sessions, all teachers are aware of the school-wide instructional focus to increase rigor and the quality of classroom discussions and student work products. The work of the professional learning teams (PLTs) is based on the instructional focus as is the school's professional learning plan for the year which offers sessions such as "Questioning and Discussion Strategies", "What's Your Math Problem?", and "Cooperative Problem Solving: Analyzing and Learning from Student Work." One teacher said, "Our rubrics provide differentiation but always meet high expectations. The Instructional focus is rigor—in writing and in open-ended, genuine, discussion coming from the students."
- Administration provides opportunities for ongoing intervisitations coordinated and organized by teachers and coaches. The professional development calendar is updated and revised periodically based on the results of observations and feedback. Teachers submit reflection records after visitations and instructional coaches follow up to support teacher growth and development. One teacher commented, "We work together to increase the quality of student work and discussion in professional development and grade meetings. The shared experience helps a lot to understand what a rigorous piece of work is."
- A review of lesson observations reveals that administrators hold teachers accountable to implementing best practices to support the instructional focus. Comments include, "Plan for more challenging activities (for example, how many equivalent fractions can you find for $\frac{3}{4}$?) and insist that students explain how they know the two fractions are equivalent. For example, 'Find two equivalent fractions and explain how you know the two fractions are equivalent.'" "In order to raise the level of student discussions, consider looking into having targeted students or student designees whose role would be to initiate higher order questions, extend and enrich the discussion and invite comments from their classmates when they engage in small and whole-group discussions."
- Parents receive clear expectations for their children's success in school through such items as the parents handbook, a sample ABC of expectations for kindergarten, parent workshops, and informative PowerPoints on matters such as homework assistance with clear instructions on areas such as the distributive property in math. They spoke about weekly reports and updates, progress reports, online venues such as MyOn, Think Central, Class Dojo, and frequent communications with teachers and administrators. Parents partner with teachers to become actively involved in their children's education. One parent explained, "I came to class and they explained to me how the math is done. So now I get it and I am able to explain it to my child."

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations to promote the implementation of the Common Core instructional shifts and strengthen instructional capacity. Distributed teacher leadership is embedded across all areas of the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence leading to continuous shared improvement of teacher practice. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect teaching and learning across the school resulting in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations to develop and implement practices shared within a grade or a discipline embedding Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Teams are structured into professional learning communities (PLCs), professional learning teams (PLTs), and “branch-offs” where teachers come together as a subset of a larger team to engage in a cycle of inquiry. All collaborations are guided by the use of protocols such as the Critical Friends protocol in order to analyze student work and strengthen teacher capacity. During a teacher team observed, a teacher presented student work that demonstrated students’ struggles with using their own words when writing with text evidence and shared with her colleagues the strategies she had implemented that had been offered by her teammates. In this way, all teachers collaborate to build their capacity, commit to implementing new strategies and as a team, review the results in student achievement so as to make further adjustments or incorporate new strategies into common practice across the grade.
- The Professional Development Committee, which includes teachers and administrators, shares information from walkthroughs and observations to help teachers improve their practice as well as adjust unit plans. Teacher peer feedback helps to strengthen instructional capacity across grades. For example, a third grade teacher team created and implemented additional scaffolds to support all student writers throughout the writing process based on teacher reflections noting that students needed more samples of writing, support and mini-lessons. The team collaborated in designing graphic organizers and additional mini-lessons, which were used across all third grade classrooms.
- Teachers take ownership of the work of the teams to make key decisions affecting curriculum and instruction on and across grades. Grade 5 teachers formed a team around supporting writing. They made revisions to Units 1 and 2 of ReadyGEN on informational and opinion writing focusing on revision of writing. Their current work is focused on using student writing samples to make adjustments to the writing plan to support narrative writing development. Special education teachers came together to streamline ReadyGEN unit lesson objectives and developed a pacing calendar. Teachers of English language learners formed a vertical team to engage in work around incorporating academic language into lesson planning.