



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 006 Lillie D. Blake

Elementary M006

**45 East 81 Street
Manhattan
NY 10028**

Principal: Lauren Fontana

**Date of review: May 17, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons**

The School Context

P.S. 006 Lillie D. Blake is an elementary school with 701 students from kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 13% Asian, 2% Black, 7% Hispanic, and 75% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.3%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Focus	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. In addition, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact

Curricula across grades and content areas promote college and career readiness for all students and ensure that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the Teachers College curriculum for English Language Arts (ELA) and *Investigations* as the foundation for their math curriculum. This is supplemented by *Singapore Math*, *GO Math!*, *Contexts for Learning Mathematics* and *EngageNY*. The school has clearly defined criteria for what it means to exit a grade level and to attain the enduring understandings and key skills that ensure success in college and career. The school's curricula, which infuses non-fiction as one method for incorporating instructional shifts, has been strategically and purposefully utilized, updated, revised and supplemented for all grades. The school focus is on making reading visible in the writing. Inferential thinking is emphasized in every task and activity. In addition, upon review of unit plans and maps and after analyzing gaps for ELA and math, the school redesigned maps based on student work to support instruction in core areas.
- Habits of mind are evident across curriculum maps and units of study and can be seen embedded in tasks, such as word problems requiring students to persist and in questioning where students have to apply past working knowledge to new situations in order to solve problems and think interdependently to complete classroom activities. For example, when the grade 4 team created a Native American research project, students were given the opportunity to create an eBook, PowerPoint, brochure, poster, iMovie, essay or diorama as an extension to display their work while they presented to their peers.
- Rigorous habits and higher-order skills, such as those that require students to create their own meaning, integrate skills into processes, and use what they have learned to solve real world problems, are identified and embedded coherently across grades and subjects. For example, tasks were developed to have students complete main idea responses of the American Revolution using the Teachers College progression chart as a guide. School leaders and teachers can articulate how curricula, across and within grade levels, are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and scaffold student success to promote college and career readiness for all students in grades kindergarten to 5. For example, the curricula were revised to incorporate a significant increase in the amount of opportunities students had to engage in student-to-student discussion and afterwards required to complete a writing response related to literature previously read. This is evident in unit plans and curricula maps.

Area of Focus

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 inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations, in which they take ownership and provide leadership.

Impact

Teachers' professional collaborations have strengthened teacher practice and increased student achievement for all learners. Teachers to play an integral role in key decisions within the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The instruction cabinet, which is composed of administrators, teacher team leaders, teacher coaches and partners, meets regularly to look at data, problem solve and make key decisions to address the instructional needs of the school. The school utilizes Google Docs where teachers and administrators can share comments about data analysis and teacher observations, therefore allowing for the monitoring of teacher goals, school goals and progress towards these goals. For example, at the literacy team meeting, teachers use pre-unit assessment for the Social Issue Book Club unit to form and create small strategy groups based on needs and created mentor jots. The teacher leader asked about how the context for small groups will be set, what the teaching point was, how teachers will teach, how students will practice, and what will be the assignment for the next session. The teams focus primarily on curricular improvement and instructional practice. While mastery of goals for targeted student groups results from teacher team work, this practice has not yet been expanded to the analysis of common assessments in the identification of student groups that are connected via content or on grade level student groups. As a result, there are missed opportunities to support students in the mastery of goals.
- The vast majority of teachers collaborate in professional teams where they develop and implement schoolwide instructional practices and ensure the alignment for the Common Core and instructional shifts to continuously promote improved achievement for all learners. Each grade meets once a week with a content focus for each week's meeting. Over the course of a month, literacy, math and content areas are discussed with the administration or literacy coach. Teacher teams look at student work, revise curriculum, and create plans that reflect a wide range of pedagogical approaches. Notes are recorded during the meeting and shared with those in attendance, including administration. Teachers share artifacts representing how they supported student growth in their units.
- Teachers play a vital role in school level decision-making. Teachers lead the teams, both grade level and vertical, that they participate in. The team leader collaborates with his or her colleagues to set the agenda, find additional resources and assign next steps. Teachers have a voice with instructional initiatives and work with administration to come up with the focus for the various inquiry teams. During the interview, a teacher stated "We want more inferential writing from our students. As such, our school leaders focus on our instructional focus, writing about reading."

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

Impact

Common instructional strategies across classes and grades provide students access to the curriculum, allow them to study subjects in depth, and to engage in high levels of thinking, leading to student ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus of feedback as a tool for meaningful instructional improvement, specifically in making thinking visible through writing, is very evident. Across the vast majority of classrooms, students engaged in conversations with each other around their work. In a fourth grade classroom, students read the text "Would you be a Loyalist or a Patriot?" Students looked at two opposing points of view and shared their voice. One student stated, "I selected to be loyal to the king, even though I do not agree with the argument of the Loyalist to give myself a challenge."
- Teachers employ questioning as well as reciprocal teaching strategies that lead to high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership. In an ELA class, teachers asked students to think about what they know about a character other than the main character and share with a peer. For example, one student asked their partner, "What do you think of Via as a character and do you emphasize with her?" Children question each other and this leads to rich discussions. In a literacy class, students read the book *Wonder* and interpreted characters in their group. Students shared social issues and expressed how different characters deal with them differently. Students share out jots about what they learned and responses were memorialized on the class jot board.
- Student engagement and ownership of their learning were consistently high. In a writing class, students revised their conclusions to reflect on their hypothesis, asked questions about their results, gave explanations, and added if it warranted further investigations. Students reviewed a sample conclusion and turned to talk with their partner. Students worked in partnership or independently, were on task for the assignment, and held each other accountable. Students reflected, using the sample as a guide, and identified what parts of the conclusion they could incorporate into their own writing. One student stated, "Just like the author my conclusion has to stand up against peer review because scientists review each other's data." Teachers shared that they have focused a lot on the writing process and how to move students up the staircase of complexity.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families.

Impact

As a result, there is a culture of mutual accountability and the school successfully partners with families to support student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate expectations to all staff through verbal and written structures, including teacher orientations, ongoing workshops, staff handbook, and the school website. Teachers are given surveys at the beginning of the year and have a menu of topics and options to select and participate in professional learning activities which best suit their needs, facilitated by administration, network personnel, consultants, and/or teachers themselves. The school's collaboration with Teachers College promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning. Teachers participate in leadership groups, attend workshops, and host/visit in-house lab sites and debriefings with consultants. The school's partnership with *The Reading Rescue Program* through Teachers College provides teachers, paraprofessionals and assistant teachers with coursework on the early foundations of reading. The work with both of these organizations has directly improved teachers' practice and student performance in the areas of reading and writing.
- The school has clearly defined standards for professional development and classroom practices informed by elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* which ensure that learning for all stakeholders consistently reflects high expectations. Administration meets with teachers to review elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and have frequent cycles of observations with feedback for next steps and identifiable next steps to improve teaching and learning. The Professional Development Committee created a survey to assess the needs of the staff in different areas, including curriculum development, community building, and social-emotional learning. An 80-minute block of professional development was planned using the collected data. There are several cycles throughout the year where teachers lead and participate in these groups. Additionally, teachers lead ongoing professional development workshops for assistant teachers that directly impact growth of students.
- The school orchestrates ongoing events and creates multiple opportunities to partner with and engage families in learning, fostering their participation in a culture of high expectations connected to college and career readiness. In one workshop, parents observed a writing lesson and worked with their children while engaged in the process of writing. The Parents as Learning Partners program provides workshops that focus on math, reading, social studies, or science. Parents are provided with a take away, such as a math game or a handout on specific mathematical strategies showing the progression of least to most efficient strategy. Families from grades 3-5 also participate in ELA and math test information sessions. Additionally, grade 4 families participate in a science fair. Students work on their projects independently or in a group at home to be presented at the science fair.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school consistently uses and adjusts curricula-aligned assessment practices, grading policies and pedagogical strategies that focus on checks for understanding to create a clear portrait for students and staff regarding student achievement or progress.

Impact

Teachers are keenly aware of student progress and develop dynamic portraits of student mastery that lead to adjustments to curriculum or instruction in order to increase student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- One school focus, as articulated by all teachers and administrators, centers on deepening the knowledge of students by consistently analyzing and using student data to drive instruction. Teachers identify trends in data in order to ensure all students' individual needs are met and students are progressing academically. This work has led to increased focus on the design of tasks. The school uses a variety of assessments to improve student learning. Running records are administered to all students throughout the school year to inform students' fluency, foundational skills, and literal and inferential comprehension. Students in grades 3 to 5 take pre- and post-assessments for each reading unit and curriculum is adjusted after looking at whole-class trends from these assessments. Teachers use the data from the pre-assessments to create small targeted groups. In writing, all grades administer an on-demand writing assessment prior to teaching a unit which is analyzed and teachers make adjustments to the curriculum based on the trends they notice, as well as create small targeted strategy groups. Students use rubrics, progressions, targeted writing checklists, strengths, and next steps to analyze their own work and set goals. The upper grade students assess the work of a peer, and provide feedback for next steps.
- Feedback comes from teachers, peers and through self-assessment. Teachers provide students with actionable and meaningful feedback regarding their academic achievement. "Nice job writing about your character. As you continue to read this week, we'd like you to remember your goal, writing post-its about how part of the story relates to the whole story. See our example for help!" When asked about rubrics, one student stated, "We use them as a guide to improve our work." Another student stated, "We give feedback to each other on post-its." Another student said, "I want to be an author. I know I have to improve the specificity of my writing across genres."
- Across the vast majority of classrooms teachers monitored the progress of students within each unit of study through strategies such as use of checklists, questioning, exit slips and conferencing in order to effectively group students. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding. Across classrooms, teachers were observed conferring with students and providing them with strategies for improvement. In a few classes, though they were in groups, some students sought the teacher to validate their answers. According to school leaders, students have begun using reading learning progressions. Teachers articulate a progression of learning in a domain that provides a big picture of what is to be learned and supports instructional planning and formative assessment. Students self-assess where they are on the continuum of skills, set goals, and develop strategies for working on their goals.