



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 021 Edward Hart

Elementary School Q021

**147-36 26 Avenue
Queens
NY 11354**

Principal: Debra Buszko

**Date of review: March 24, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

P.S. 021 Edward Hart is an elementary school with 1,368 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 62% Asian, 1% Black, 29% Hispanic, and 7% White students. The student body includes 19% English Language Learners and 11% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.1%.

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	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	Well Developed
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use ongoing 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	Focus	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	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership and teachers play an integral role in key decisions.

Impact

Teacher instructional capacity has strengthened while implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts has been promoted. Teachers have played an integral role in focusing on the instructional goals as well as the design and delivery of schoolwide coherence building to support student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in the 3rd team used a protocol to guide their analysis of student work through the lens of the school's instructional focus. Team members analyzed student work in math to see about students' use of academic vocabulary. Each student work sample was read and annotated by each team member. Team members then compared the grades they would have issued to the students' work by using the New York State (NYS) rubric to ensure that they were similarly grading work. Once established that they were grading cohesively, team members discussed interventions to strategically plan on instituting in response to the specific areas of concern identified through their analysis of the student work. Specifically, teachers discussed furthering their work to focus students on the CUBES (Circling all numbers, Underline the question, Box important words, Evaluate next steps, Solve) process.
- Teachers of all grades are in grade-level teams and were integral to curricula decisions that promoted Common Core and the instructional shifts. Teams met at the start of this school and, using data from the 2014-2015 school year, reordered units from the *GoMath* curricula to ensure greater coherence throughout the school.
- An analysis of data revealed that on average, 50% of students in grades 3, 4 and 5 scored a level 3 or 4 on the NYS English Language Arts (ELA) exam and that a schoolwide instructional focus on developing academic language for the purpose of supporting arguments in discussion and writing across the content areas. Teachers in the Instructional Mentor (IM) team played an integral role in this decision and took ownership of the design and delivery of professional development toward creating schoolwide coherence across grades and subjects. The IM team provided professional development to the entire teaching staff by first presenting their findings to the entire staff through a PowerPoint presentation at a faculty conference titled *Implementing our Instructional Focus: Academic Vocabulary*. The team also provided a resource of materials titled *Lifting the Level of Academic Language: High-Interest Activities to Engage the use of Academic Language*. The IM team conduct regular assessments of implementation of these professional practices through a series of inter-visitations during which visitors' all use a common note taking sheet with focused questions, all making sure that the focus of academic vocabulary is the lens through which teachers look.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders have created a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all constituents, provides professional development opportunities for staff, and college and career readiness skills for students, fostering a culture of high expectations for all members of the school community.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations results in effective academic and personal growth of students and adults, however, additional parental support is needed.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations for teaching and learning through weekly professional development sessions, weekly emailed newsletters and professional learning events. All staff members receive ongoing professional development from school-based staff, including school leaders and teacher leaders, who support them in meeting all expectations. Agenda items from professional development sessions emphasize constant support around implementation of the school's instructional focus. Professional development activities also focus on topics such as designing coherent instruction, assessment student learning during instruction and engaging all students in learning. In addition, members of an instructional mentor team provide training linked to implementation of the school's instructional focus.
- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and use the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as the rubric that defines high expectations in classroom practice. They provide individualized feedback on professionalism, instructional expertise and collegial collaboration.
- Feedback to students that communicates high standards is regularly provided. This comes in the forms of informal checks for understanding during instruction, formal teacher-student conferencing during class and the use of rubrics that both praise students and challenge them to improve on their work across all grades and subjects. An example of this feedback observed on a posted student essay reads: "You work diligently to weave in your thinking and text citations to strengthen your arguments. I would love to see you use a variety of transitional statements to add in new evidence. You can use your classroom chart to help you practice doing so." In another classroom, an example of this feedback reads: "You have an engaging introduction that captures the reader's attention through asking a rhetorical question. I would love to have seen a stronger conclusion that not only restates the main idea but also adds insight and locks in the main idea." Writing conference sheets and notes and targeted feedback on student work.
- Families reported that their children are held to high expectations that are made clear by the rubrics teachers used to assess children's work and the individualized feedback that teachers wrote on those rubrics. Parents also praised that their children were grouped in ways that allowed all students to be challenged, ensuring that all students no matter what their level, were expected to learn through challenging work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricula alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts results in coherence across grades and subject areas promoting college and career readiness for all learners. All students have access to the curricula and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricula calendars are constructed using the Teachers College *Reading and Writing* and *GoMath!* programs. The school also ensures curricula coherence with the New York City (NYC) Social Studies Scope and Sequence and the science NYS Standards. Teachers meet in grade level teams during common prep periods to plan common units that integrate instructional shifts. One example of the inclusion of the math instructional shift regarding rigor and the application in a grade four academic intervention services (AIS) math lesson asked students to apply math concepts in a “real world” situation involving the determination as to how much fabric would be needed when “making stuffed animals for the local children’s hospital.” Students were given the amount of fabric available and the length of fabric needed to make one stuffed animal, to determine whether three stuffed animals could be made. Another example found in a lesson plan is the inclusion of a “Fluency Drill” in which students would “be reviewing the basic area of a rectangle in order to prepare them for finding the base area in.”
- During a data dive in September 2015, school leaders and teachers noticed that although 66% of students scored on Level 3 or 4 on the NYS math exams, compared to other schools in their district, students scored lower than their peers with similar demographics. In response to this, the professional development team decided to hire a staff developer to guide the faculty toward further exploration of the *GoMath!* program and how teachers could effectively use the on line reports and supports (this is the fourth year that the school is using *GoMath!*). Analysis of student success data has also resulted in a realignment of the *GoMath!* curricula to change placement of the area and perimeter unit to allow for a smoother transition for students into that unit from the multiplication unit.
- Lesson plans from all observed classes evidenced teachers’ planning for the cognitive engagement of all students. Lessons included group practice with differentiated groups, ensuring that students of all levels had access to meaningful work assignments ensuring cognitive engagement. In a grade 2 lesson plan, the writing workshop small group for English as a New Language (ENL) to provide opportunities to build more vocabulary, students were asked to “pick out an object from the surprise bag and describe it using the similes ‘Like/As’.” Students were then asked to “play a dice game to scaffold the learning.”
- Students were actively engaged in a grade 5 math lesson that included as the key questions such as, “Explain how area and volume are different?” “How does using these methods affect the volume?” and “What connections do you see between both methods?”

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 and how students learn best. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, as well as by discussions at the team and school levels. Student discussions and products evidence the high levels of thinking and student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers guided students through activities requiring that students develop academic language to support arguments in discussion and writing across the content areas. In a fifth grade self-contained class, students were engaged in an activity requiring them to determine the meaning of words through the use of context clues. Students then discussed their findings with partners and used rubrics to self-assess. In a third grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students were engaged in discussion around comparing fractions. Overheard discussion between two pairs revealed that students were actively using the “Math Talk” sentence prompts displayed in the room. Specifically, one student challenged her partner by asking, “How could you prove that your answer is correct?” Another student, in asking for clarification from his partner, asked “Why did you use that strategy?”
- Anchor postings detail how the school’s instructional focus is reflected in all subject areas are posted in all classrooms. These postings were all individualized to the classroom, connecting academic vocabulary in all subject areas and the grade level of the class as well. In addition, students in all classrooms were able to quickly identify the specific posting that applied to the lesson in which they were engaged and were eager to demonstrate their ability to use those words appropriately.
- Feedback to kindergarten students around a project in which they were to teach someone about a specific topic praises students for use of academic vocabulary, guiding them to refer to the word wall for future use. For example, one piece of teacher feedback read: “You really learned a lot about squirrels. I love your facts. Next steps: Reread with a partner to use work wall words.”
- In a third grade glass, math notebooks contained multiple examples of writing that reflected high levels of student thinking. One example reads, “First, I thought of the definition of greater than in fractions. Next, look at two fourths and two eighths. I was looking at the denominators to see which one is greater.” In a grade 4 class, students were engaged in high level discussions and activities in four differentiated stations around the study of women’s suffrage. In the first station students created thinking maps that highlighted the different leaders’ perspectives. Students worked independently to design propaganda posters that reflected their understanding of the different events that led to that convention. At the third station, students engaged in high level discussions, rooted in textual evidence, about modern day women’s struggles around a shared text. At the fourth station, students used concept circles to write sentences using key academic vocabulary.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers' use of varied checks for understanding allow them to make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs ensuring they are aware of their next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Students came to a quick consensus when reporting on the use of assessments and rubrics with regard to written assignments and clarity around students' attainment of mastery. After receiving detailed rubrics with comments that include written feedback with next steps from teachers, students then conference with teachers on the feedback and how it can impact their writing. Students then improve upon their writing by implementing the next steps detailed in the feedback and again turn in their assignments to their teachers. One example of feedback reads, "You have a strong teaching tone and voice. I like how you are starting to look at many ways that this could impact society. Next time try to use the graphic organizer to plan your paragraphs and add in transitions to make information smoother." Another example reads, "Perhaps eliminate this and add on a final text detail to show how the presumption was false."
- Across the school, students use checklists as tools of self-assessment during the writing process. The grade 3 Information writing checklist includes statements such as "I used what I knew about spelling patterns to help me spell and edit before I wrote my final draft" and "I wrote in ways that helped readers read with expression, reading some parts quickly, some slowly, some parts in one sort of voice, and others in another voice." Another example of student self-assessment is the posted Short Response Practice Self-Scoring rubric. This rubric contains statements that read "I wrote an answer that answered the question," "I included a specific detail from the text to support my answer," and "I included a second specific detail from the text to support my answer." Students also reported that they are required to use both self and peer editing for writing assignments.
- Upon entering a grade 3 class, the teacher was observed checking for understanding using the two questions identified in her lesson plan as the "quick check" questions. Results of this formative assessment guided the teacher's practice as she used this data to make on the spot adjustments to student groupings, ensuring that all students' learning needs would be met during the lesson's next stage. This involved students, within these groups, engaged in work designed to challenge them at their demonstrated level. All students were actively and appropriately challenged during the group work. Once students had begun this new work, the teacher continued to circulate throughout the room, taking time to individually conference with students as to their progress.