



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 173 Fresh Meadows

Elementary School Q173

**174-10 67 Avenue
Queens
NY 11365**

Principal: Molly Wang

**Date of review: December 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

P.S. 173 Fresh Meadows is an elementary school with 959 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 58% Asian, 1% Black, 12% Hispanic, and 27% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 13% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 97.0%.

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	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	Focus	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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

In all classrooms, teachers use formative and summative assessments, aligned to curricula, to create a clear portrait of student mastery of targeted skills across all grades and content areas. Using common assessments, teachers evaluate and track student progress and implement curricular and instructional adjustments.

Impact

Assessment practices result in all teachers developing an accurate picture of student mastery of grade level and content area goals. Teachers' effective use of data to provide all staff and students with meaningful feedback drives adjustments to instruction that improve student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader presented an assessment plan indicating how teachers use *i-Ready* online assessments, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) running records and other Common Core Learning Standards-aligned benchmark assessments, to gather and track data on student progress towards mastery of targeted skills and standards. *i-Ready* is used as a diagnostic assessment of student progress on performance tasks in reading across grades 2 through 5. Teachers also embed common pre- and post-unit assessments, projects and constructed response items in unit plans for all grades and content areas. Conference logs and a teacher team tracking tool indicate that all teachers complete assessment analysis logs that chart growth in student performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, and identify areas for enrichment and intervention in all disciplines and grades.
- There is a school-wide grading policy that is linked to Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data from TCRWP assessments for all students and common unit assessments, goals and data for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Samples of work in student folders illustrate teacher use of a common template to capture data on student reading levels and a Teachers College writing rubric to assess student performance on writing tasks. Item skills data charts and spreadsheets with class and school level data illustrate ongoing tracking of student achievement school wide. Teacher team meeting agendas and minutes show analysis of assessment data, leading to adjustments such as grouping and re-grouping students and incorporation of online resources to further support all students towards improved levels of mastery.
- Using a variety of task-specific rubrics, all teachers provide students with actionable and meaningful feedback about their strengths and next steps for progress towards achieving learning goals for all grades and content areas. During the meeting with students, all of the students exhibited work samples to which a task-specific rubric, such as a narrative writing, argumentative writing or math problem solving rubric, was attached. Further, all students interviewed during the Quality Review pointed to rubric-based teacher feedback with next steps in the form of "Glows" and "Grows". On one work sample the "Glow" commended the student for "citing relevant details from the text in describing the main character". On another the "Grow" advised the student to "stretch out the moment by using step-by-step action sentences" as a next step to improve the work. Both comments were aligned to criteria from the rubric attached to the work sample.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, all students were engaged in discussions and completed challenging tasks. While teaching practices consistently reflect multiple entry points, the deepening of learning through extensions into curricula and tasks for diverse learners was not typically evident.

Impact

Consistent application of scaffolds and multiple entry points results in students being engaged in rigorous tasks and discussions across grades and content areas. However, instructional practices revealed missed opportunities to further extend learning for all students via tasks that elevate their thinking and discussions and promote ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classrooms visited, teachers provided supports and scaffolds for students to be highly engaged in learning. Students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, were observed in small group activities, one-to-one conferencing with the teacher, or working with a partner to respond to the task, prior to sharing with the whole class. In a grade 4 science class, the teacher used an interactive whiteboard and manipulatives such as a cup, light bulb, cable, wire and tray to guide students in exploring how to create electricity. Working in groups, the students experimented with different combinations of the manipulatives and used clues provided by the teacher to get the bulb to light up. Students who completed the task reported on how they arrived at the solution and shared challenges of the task. Similarly, in a grade 5 math class about the order of operations, the teacher distributed task cards and strips of paper with problems for students to work on at stations across the room.
- School leaders place emphasis on high levels of student engagement in lessons that immerse all students in discussions where they express diverse points of view and question each other's thinking. In most classrooms visited, lessons demonstrated this focus, with teachers posing higher order thinking questions that fueled discussions across classrooms. In a grade 4 ELA class, after using a chart to describe types of text structures, the teacher followed up by presenting a video clip of a selection for students to discuss the text structure that was in evidence. Using clue words from the chart about types of text structures and details from the video, students in small groups engaged in a lively discussion with competing ideas and rationales for their decisions about the type of text structures noted in their group's text. Similar opportunities for students to challenge each other's thinking through high level peer-to-peer questioning and discussion, were not evident in a few of the other classrooms visited, including one where students sat listening to the teacher read and think aloud from a text and then read their own text silently to do a "stop and jot".
- The use of extensions of tasks to deepen student engagement in challenging work was evident in several classrooms, including a grade 5 ELA class where students used Depth of Knowledge (DOK) question stems to craft questions about differentiated mentor texts. Students read portions of their group's text to create questions that "connect ideas across chunks of text" and get others to "think beyond the text". Students were heard phrasing and re-phrasing questions, as some students worked on elevating their questions by changing the question stems. A similar extension of tasks was not evident in several other classrooms visited, including a grade 2 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, where all students worked to "find the missing part of 100, by counting up from the given part" of that number.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and illustrate strategic integration of instructional shifts. Teachers collaborate to create curricula with rigorous tasks for diverse learners across grades and content areas.

Impact

Common Core-aligned units of study offer all students ready access to challenging learning experiences designed to foster high levels of thinking and learning across all grades and disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Modules sequenced by topics and grades provide teachers with content from TCRWP curricula to infuse literacy-based tasks into interdisciplinary units of curricula for all grades. *Foundations*, *Reading Rescue* and *Reading Recovery* curricula supplement literacy instruction for kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 respectively. Math curricula include the Common Core-aligned *Envisions* math program and units of study linked to teacher use of *EngageNY* resources for additional focus on instructional shifts. Pacing calendars, aligned to the New York State and City scope and sequence, guide instruction in social studies and science, with grant-funded initiatives providing additional content for an inquiry-based, hands-on science program that showcases projects from a unit of study in each grade.
- All units of study highlight topics, teaching points, essential questions, assessments, target vocabulary, and strategies for shared, guided and independent practice activities. Monthly unit overviews, unit maps and lesson plans reflect academic tasks that require students to engage in close reading of complex texts and cite evidence in responding to tasks about the texts. Further, there are project-based tasks requiring students to produce informational essays and describe math problem solving or science inquiry steps. Curricula also include content for a dual language program that offers Mandarin to Chinese ELLs and a “Building a Community of Readers” initiative for social emotional learning activities across grades. Curricula for physical education, health, visual and performing arts, computer technology and a variety of service learning projects, round out an instructional program designed to build college and career readiness skills for all students.
- With a school-wide instructional focus on “engaging all students in rigorous lessons with multi-level tasks that require them to engage in high quality discussions, questioning and thinking”, curriculum maps and units of study outline enrichment and remediation activities for students in all subgroups, including advanced learners, students with disabilities and ELLs. Unit maps illustrate the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and DOK tools to embed high-level questioning stems, detailed instructional strategies and links to text resources for teaching students in each of these diverse groups. For all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities, the use of visuals, target vocabulary, games, sentence frames and manipulatives is embedded in lesson plans and units. Technology-based programs such as *Kidpix*, *Kidspiration*, *i-Ready* and *Cool Math* provide students with access to additional Common Core-aligned tasks for remediation and enrichment.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate expectations for high levels of shared accountability for learning across the school. All staff members communicate and partner with families to support academic expectations and learning goals for all students.

Impact

A myriad of effective communication systems and support structures contribute to strong partnerships between staff and families and result in mutual accountability for improving achievement by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- During teacher team meetings, several teachers stated that the principal sets clear expectations for instruction, through a school wide focus on engaging all students in rigorous learning with high quality discussions, effective questioning and higher order-thinking activities across disciplines. To that end, in alignment to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, all teachers receive training to improve their effectiveness in engaging all students in learning, questioning and discussion and using assessment in instruction. School leaders also work with teachers to deepen understanding of expectations linked to these components by observing lessons and providing teachers with actionable feedback. Using peer-to-peer inter-visitations, common planning sessions and other professional learning events, teachers collaborate with peers to follow up on all expectations and share strategies for success in improving achievement for all learners.
- Through memos and discussions at weekly staff meetings, school leaders receive and share information on expectations for each week and remind all staff of instructional priorities for all grades and subjects. An excerpt from the staff handbook outlines “Instructional Bottom Lines/Non-Negotiables”, which include expectations for use of the workshop model of instruction, daily read-alouds, reading and writing workshops, daily conferences with students, and small group instruction in all classrooms. Teachers reported that in addition to ongoing professional development from school-based staff and consultants, they attend offsite professional learning events and review videos and articles that enhance their expertise in meeting instructional expectations. This includes full day trainings from consultants who work with both general education and special education staff on strategies for effectively teaching students with disabilities.
- During the meeting with families, they all stated that they are regularly invited to meet with teachers, sit in on lessons, view projects in classrooms, and participate in grade-specific workshops which enlighten them about expectations for their children’s learning and strategies for helping the children at home. They noted that events such as Tuesday outreach and conferencing sessions, a science night, kindergarten orientation and briefings about ELA and math assessments, provided an overview of curricula, expectations for class work and homework, and sample tasks. The families also added that staff members’ constantly communicate with them via the school’s website, text messages, phone calls, grade-based newsletters, event calendars and emails. Utilizing progress reports that are sent home and data from online portals such as *Class Dojo*, staff members successfully partner with families, whose work with their children on projects and missing assignments contributes to high quality work products showing student progress towards readiness for the next grade. Some parents volunteer as “Learning Leaders”, partnering with staff to help in areas such as physical education and reading with and tutoring students in classrooms.

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

Teams of teachers meet regularly to systematically analyze their instructional practices and develop strategies for improving staff and student achievement. Distributive leadership structures facilitate teacher collaboration with school leaders to make critical decisions about teaching and learning across the school.

Impact

Through extensive teamwork, teachers regularly reflect on their pedagogy and play an integral role in key decisions that improve teacher capacity and student outcomes across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers meet weekly during common team planning periods and at designated times on Mondays, for professional learning activities tied to inquiry-based cycles of learning. A teacher team tracking tool captures all data and team activities for each inquiry cycle, allowing school leaders to be fully informed of team activities and to support teams with relevant feedback. Tasks during these meetings include all teachers collaborating to examine and refine units of study to tighten alignment to Common Core Standards and embed challenging tasks for all students. Based on their findings from assessment data and student work, teachers make adjustments to curricula and instruction by sharing lessons ideas, texts and links to online resources. Given a finding that many students struggle with problem solving involving word problems, math teachers revised math curricula to incorporate additional word problems and developed a math rubric that requires students to provide more detailed explanations of problem solving steps than in the past. Teachers also added more tasks linked to nonfiction texts to support all students in evidenced-based writing across all content areas.
- Team activities include teachers using protocols and “Analyzing Student Work” sheets to examine student work and data for indicators of mastery of standards and skills. Teachers look collaboratively at trends across groups of target students to identify gaps in learning, develop strategies for improving their mastery of applicable skills and set timelines for progress monitoring. For example, the grade 4 teacher team analyzed samples of student writing based on a performance task about main idea and details. Using the Teachers College “Learning Progressions Continuum”, teachers discussed the characteristics of the work sample, compared findings to norm understanding of each student’s mastery level and determined next steps for improving each student’s performance. A review of records of teacher team activities for each inquiry cycle indicates that for the current cycle, the team is focused on interventions for students in the lowest third of the school’s population.
- The school utilizes grade leaders, special education, dual language lead staff, and other teacher leaders to facilitate inquiry-based activities within the weekly teacher team meetings. These teacher leaders are members of a professional learning team that meets monthly with school leaders to engage in decision-making that is integral to growth in staff and student achievement. They provide input in the selection and development of curriculum materials, design of assessments, and evaluation of instructional practices. They also collaborate with peers to implement professional learning sessions and intervisitations. School leaders credit teamwork for levels of individual teacher growth seen on *Advance* data reports and improved student achievement noted on recent TCRWP unit assessments.