



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. Q224

Elementary-Middle School Q224

**252-12 72 Avenue
Queens
NY 11426**

Principal: Desmond Park

Date of review: December 15-16, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen

The School Context

P.S. Q224 is an elementary-middle school with 427 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 18% Asian, 30% Black, 31% Hispanic, and 14% White students. The student body includes 22% English Language Learners and 100% students with disabilities. Boys account for 73% of the students enrolled and girls account for 27%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.4%.

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	Focus	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 <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	Celebration	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Curricula-aligned teaching practices reflect an articulated and coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, as embodied in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Lessons reflect well-designed essential questions, and strategic individual pacing and supports.

Impact

Teaching practices ensure high levels of engagement for all students. All learners engage in cognitively appropriate and meaningful tasks and produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout the school there is a consistent belief, both stated and written, that students learn best when they are taught in a safe and motivating environment, which addresses different modalities and fosters independence. Lesson plans include the integration of the instructional shifts across all content area subjects. For example, during a class visit for students with cognitive disabilities, the focus of the math lesson was to learn how to add numbers totaling five. The teacher demonstrated examples of sums equaling five. Students were asked to count their fingers on one hand, trace, and number each finger. Students worked in small groups, used manipulatives, and were asked to show different configurations adding up to five. Rather than provide answers, the teacher pushed students to persevere by asking clarifying questions, thereby fostering independence.
- Lessons include differentiated activities, multiple entry points through leveled texts, manipulatives, graphic organizers, visual aids, and assistive technology. In addition, teachers use the CUBES strategy, developed by the school, to solve word problems. During a middle school math lesson, students Circled the numbers, Underlined the question, Boxed the key words, Eliminated what they didn't need, and asked themselves "Does my answer make Sense?"
- During classroom visits, classes for students with autism begin the day with Get Ready to Learn (GRTL), a yoga program designed to help students focus. Teachers stated the use of joint action routines (JARs) is a strategy they use for teaching communication skills through motivating activities that are conducted repeatedly with an emphasis on students interacting with peers. Consistently throughout all classes visited, teachers instructed students to turn and talk to their partner.
- School leaders have stated that through observations, teachers are scoring higher in competency 3b. "Teachers are more aware of the types of questions and have been able to differentiate their question repertoire." During the 2014-2015 school year, 78% of teachers received a rating of highly effective and 21% effective. During 2015-2016 school year, projected Measures of Teacher Practice rating is 83% Highly Effective and 17% Effective.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and teachers make purposeful choices in aligning curricula to the Common Core Standards, with integration of the instructional shifts. Analysis of student work and data inform curricula modifications which facilitate access and cognitive engagement for a diversity of learners. However, coherence of English Language Arts curricula varies across the school.

Impact

Integration of instructional shifts and content standards across grades and subjects is building coherence so that all learners have access to rigorous tasks and learning experiences that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- For all students in alternate assessment classes, *Attainment* curriculum is being utilized for English Language Arts (ELA) and math, while *Unique Learning System* curriculum is utilized for social studies and science. For all students participating in standardized assessment classes, *Go Math!* was piloted during the 2014-2015 school year to ensure rigorous math instruction. For ELA, the school utilizes *Treasures Reading Program* as its primary curriculum. Current challenges with *Treasures* include the lack of alignment to the Common Core Standards and the lack of a strong writing component, so presently the school is piloting *Ready Gen* for ELA.
- The school uses the curriculum maps included in the instructional programs as a baseline, however, to support the additional needs of their students, extensive monthly curriculum maps were developed around specific themes such as nutrition, health and hygiene, environment, and community. The school maps are designed by grades and content area subjects. For example, all classes visited were teaching lessons on different cultures, traditions, and customs. In a third grade class, students were writing persuasive letters to Santa, based on Standard 3.W.1. Students needed to include reasons why their requests should be granted.
- Teachers College strategies such as the writing workshop model are integrated into ELA planning. Across grades, there is an emphasis on inter-disciplinary informational writing. Presently, *First Authors* writing program is implemented to provide rigorous yet developmentally appropriate writing instruction. In a second grade class for students with autism, the teaching point was pattern writing. The teacher started with a read aloud of *Run Gingerbread Man, Run* and students shared information about their family traditions using drawing, picture selection, matching, or emergent writing.
- Across grades and subjects, teachers utilize a standard unit plan template. Unit plans contain the time frame, the big idea of the unit theme, essential questions, Common Core standards, modalities of instruction, differentiated strategies, and assessments. Each unit plan highlights instructional shifts that are embedded in the unit. All units focus on the development of academic vocabulary and appropriate social/behavioral communication. In a first grade class for students with autism, students were practicing positive verbal greetings with peers and requesting the sharing of a particular game or toy.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, the school uses common assessments, rubrics, and checklists aligned to its curricula to analyze student work and make adjustments to curricula at the team and classroom levels.

Impact

Teachers and students have meaningful feedback regarding student achievement. Effective adjustments are made to meet the needs of all students and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers believe that assessment data is an effective approach to drive instruction and improve student learning. Across all classrooms visited, teachers and paraprofessionals record data daily, monitor student progress through strategies such as the use of Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) leveled questions, end of unit assessments, student-to-student discussions, and student self-evaluation. During classroom visits, teachers provided time for students to self-assess using teacher team-constructed rubrics and checklists that are aligned to their curricula, and are student friendly and cognitively appropriate for both standardized and alternate assessment students.
- During classroom visits, a variety of meaningful feedback was given to students at the conclusion of each lesson. Teachers used the school created Teacher to Student Feedback Form. This form includes items such as, "I like how you: showed your work, explained your answer, and used a strategy taught in class" and "Next time, I would like to see you: calculate with precision, use the CUBE method, and prove your answer". In a standard assessment fifth grade classroom visit (8:1:1), the teacher and student reviewed the student's work and together completed the feedback form. The learning objective was to have students solve expressions with parentheses, brackets, and braces by breaking up the problem into steps to minimize the process and maximize precision. Students reviewed the order of operation rules, worked independently, then partnered to explain their strategy for solving the problem.
- Assessment results and student work samples are reviewed on a weekly basis as seen during a teacher team meeting. The results are used to determine next steps and subsequent lesson planning including re-teaching of the lesson, skill streamed group assignments, and the inclusion of the appropriate related service provider. In addition, end-of-year data is analyzed by school leaders and coaches to form tentative classes and to drive the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) goals for the upcoming school year.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

High expectations are evident throughout the school organization via the consistent use of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* in training staff. Within a culture of positive attitudes, the school has established systematic structures that engage and inform all constituents.

Impact

Embedded structures generate mutual accountability and foster successful partnerships with parents and effective communication of college and career expectations, as well as positive academic and personal growth for all students and adults.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's percentage of positive responses on five out of six categories on the New York City School Survey was higher than the citywide District 75 percentage of positive responses. For the category of Supportive Environment, the school scored 95%, for Effective School Leadership 82%, for Collaborative Teachers 92%, for Strong Family-Community Ties 84%, and for Trust 95%. In addition, teachers stated that, "high expectations are consistently exhibited and communicated to all members of the school community." They identified a variety of means such as, the staff handbook, instructional memos, emails, post-observations, and the E-Chalk website which gives teachers and school leaders a space to share all school communication.
- School leaders and staff work as a team in study groups reviewing potential curricula, and in planning and designing professional development workshops. Staff members submit feedback on workshops to inform future professional development activities. School leaders and staff provide ongoing professional development with regard to implementing best practices identified in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* with a focus on 3b, 3c, and 3d. School leaders provide next steps that are linked to the targeted components as noted in post-observation reports. In addition, paraprofessionals stated, "We work with classroom teachers in understanding Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* leveled questions." Paraprofessionals are piloting the *ReThink* program in which videos of classroom instruction are presented and then discussed.
- Unique to the school was the creation of bi-weekly teacher labs. Teachers across sites working with different populations volunteer to be videotaped. All teachers view the tapes, using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, to evaluate their peers on classroom practices and strategies used. Throughout the school, teachers articulated the belief that every student has the ability to be college and career ready by ensuring their academic and social-emotional needs are met. Students stated they are taught to think, problem solve, and show appropriate behaviors, as modeled by staff. A parent stated that there is consistent outreach and support from all staff members, "I always know what my son is going to learn in school, this helps me to help him." The school publishes a detailed monthly newsletter informing parents of all school related events.
- Ongoing parent workshops play a significant role in augmenting partnerships with the school. A parent stated that they receive ongoing training such as, "Read Alouds and Reading at Home" workshops and outside agency support such as Medicaid service coordination. Parents shared, most importantly, that their children feel safe and respected.

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

All teachers collaborate in highly developed professional learning teams that consistently look at teacher practice, examine student work, and analyze data. Embedded leadership structures are in place.

Impact

The work of the teacher teams has improved practice and established instructional coherence school-wide. Teams inform key decisions regarding curricula, pedagogy, academic and behavioral interventions ensuring a shared commitment to attaining school goals and improved student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are active members of teacher teams and meet at least three times weekly. During a teacher lab team meeting, a middle school teacher of students in alternate assessment read an adapted version of *The Outsiders*. The learning objective of the lesson was to understand the difference between fact and opinion. The teacher modeled with concrete examples, then students worked in small groups using the text to support their beliefs. The team members stated that, “this form of professional development affords us the opportunity to see what higher-order thinking looks like with our different populations and incorporate different strategies within our own classrooms.”
- During a team meeting, teachers stated, “having an instructional focus helps us to concentrate on the shifts and apply Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* leveled questions.” School leaders focus on Danielson’s indicator 3b and 3c, Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques and Engaging Students in Learning, respectively. This has led to acknowledging the importance of feedback to staff as well as students.
- One of the school’s CEP goal states, “In order to improve the learning environment, targeted students across all grade levels will continue to improve social skills/social interactions by refining selected strategies and systems as measured by a 5% increase over baseline on appropriate behavioral assessments.” The Positive Behavioral Intervention & Supports (PBIS) teacher team looked at the School Wide Information Systems (SWIS) data, Power of Choice point sheets, Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIP) to ascertain appropriate planning and strategies needed to support this goal. The intended outcome of this goal is to provide students the skills to be college and career ready.
- The school embeds leadership, structures within its day-to-day operations. Teachers take on leadership roles such as instructional coaches (ELA, math, and autism), as unit coordinators, and as team leaders. The teacher teams are grouped according to the different populations. Each population has several inquiry teams formed by grade bands. An assistant principal is assigned to a specific population and a school-based coach or lead facilitator is assigned to help provide content related resources and strategies.