Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 153 Homecrest

Elementary School K153

1970 Homecrest Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11229

Principal: Carl Santa Maria

Date of review: May 7, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Neal Opromalla
The School Context

P.S. 153 Homecrest is an elementary school with 580 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 3% Black, 30% Hispanic, 35% White, and 26% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 9% 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 94.6%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
<td></td>
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## Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

### Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured teamwork on and across grades to increase teacher capacity and to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teams collaborate to revise curricula, improve pedagogy and analyze student work.

### Impact
Participation in teacher teams results in increased instructional coherence, shared improvements in pedagogy, increases in student outcomes and mastery of goals.

### Supporting Evidence
- Teacher Teams continually collaborate to ensure support and advancement of school and student goals. The school-wide instructional focus centers on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and formative assessment. As a result, the level of rigor through effective teacher planning and pedagogy has increased.

- The work of teacher' collaborations has led to coherence of instruction across grades as teams work closely to fully implement and make explicit Common Core Standards preparing students for college and beyond. During the second grade teacher team meeting, teachers worked together to discuss their student’s preparedness for grade three resulting in a discussion around the development of a content-based project for students who are currently performing at or above grade level.

- Teacher teams make adjustments in curricula based on student data, work products and teacher reflections regarding successes and challenges uncovered during lessons. Teachers across all grade levels are currently studying how to increase student outcomes for subgroups of males. Analyses of the school’s Inquiry Spaces pages reflect SMART goals articulated by several grade level teams that were centered on the math performance of boys. The implementation of “brain break”, for example, was proposed for second grade boys. This work has resulted in 60% of all second grade boys demonstrating improvement in mathematics as measured by summative assessment data.

- Teachers across the school participate in vertical inquiry. The vertical team focusing on the performance of English language learners is studying and implementing verbal clues and graphic organizers in order to increase the performance of targeted students in the area of reading response. Thus, teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.
**Area of Focus**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**
Across most classrooms teaching strategies consistently promote multiple entry points that address the needs of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). However, strategic entry points and higher quality supports, extensions and discussions have not been sufficiently embedded and vary across subject areas and classrooms.

**Impact**
Across classrooms, curricular supports allow students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities to provide students strategic experiences to extend their thinking and demonstrate initiative so that they can take ownership of their work.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Across classrooms teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points to allow all students including ELLs and students with disabilities to demonstrate thinking. For example, in a second grade classroom, students were given mathematical shapes in order to demonstrate their conceptual understanding of their learning while other students were given an enrichment extension into the lesson in order to push their thinking.

- While across classrooms scaffolds were provided for students, the opportunity to engage in deeper levels of discussion varied. For example, in a kindergarten classroom, during a whole class discussion the teacher focused on two students for responses failing to include all who wanted to participate. Additionally, when questions were put to the entire group, most of the questions were low level. However, in a first grade classroom the dialogue between the teacher and her students included many opportunities for students to turn and talk demonstrating high levels of thinking and participation.

- Teaching practices are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and reflect a school wide belief in how students learn best. For example, the school’s focus on the instructional shift pertaining to the staircase of complexity was evident in most classrooms where reading was being taught. Students were observed engaging with grade appropriate texts and the teaching points were aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards.
Additional Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Curricula across grades are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and include the instructional shifts. Academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and other formative and summative assessment data to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

Impact
School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards resulting in the promotion of college and career readiness for all learners. The school’s curricula adjustments and modifications ensure that all students’ needs are met and performance tasks cognitively engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence
- Curricula maps provide evidence that curricula are aligned to the CCLS and integrate instructional shifts resulting in the development of academic tasks that emphasize rigorous work habits. The use of instructional materials from the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and Go Math ensure that higher order thinking and problem solving experiences are provided for all students.

- Lesson plans emphasize higher order thinking and provide a menu of strategies or leveled resources from which teachers draw upon to help students better understand the subject matter in all content areas. For example, in a fourth grade reading plan the teacher used the program, Reading A-Z, to assist her English language learners with progressive complex text. In a third grade lesson, the teacher incorporated prompts in order to help her students with disabilities make inferences from a grade level text.

- The school uses the Go Math program in all grades. The units are accessible through an online resource provided all teachers. The school has planned and refined UDL principles in mathematics to ensure access for all students. This is a work in progress that was evident in most reviewed lesson plans. However, in one kindergarten lesson, for example, there is no mention of supports for struggling students or students who fall into the subgroups of English language learners or students with disabilities.
Findings
In the vast majority of classrooms, teachers consistently create assessments that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact
Consistent assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding achievement. Instructional adjustments and revisions result in all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrating increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence
- The school uses a range of common assessments that include: Running Records, and Teachers’ College on demand writing assessments. The analysis of the results has led to the development of instructional goals for teaching and targeted professional inquiry. Furthermore, the school gathers targeted information from these assessments to track student progress towards goals in all content areas for all learners.

- School leaders and teachers gather data that includes formative assessments, rubrics and student work to ascertain levels of student learning. The use of data to inform and adjust instruction in all content areas is consistent across classrooms. In classroom checks for understanding lead to instructional adjustments that support all learners as well. Classroom visits and meetings with teachers and students revealed that feedback given to students includes clear next steps.

- During the student meeting, students shared their work products which contained both teacher and peer feedback that were aligned to a task specific rubric. Students explained how the feedback and the rubrics helped them improve in writing. One student, for example, explained the feedback helped her to focus specifically on writing better introductions in her pieces. Furthermore, students explained how they use rubrics and/or checklists across a unit in order to self-assess and make adjustments to their work pieces.

- All teachers work with students to develop goals that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and articulate students’ individual needs. Student goals are developed through the analysis of assessment results, as well as conversations between students and teachers. For example, the analysis of summative and formative student data across classrooms consistently includes information on student subgroups beyond English language learners and students with disabilities.
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff, students and parents. The school community establishes a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations and accountability for all.

Impact
The school’s effective communication structures result in a strong, mutually accountable staff. There exists a school culture focused on student achievement and support that prepares all students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders communicate and provide professional learning opportunities to support teachers. Domain 3 of the Danielson Framework is a focus to make explicit the expectations for teaching and learning as well as the attributes of effective instructional practice. The school provides professional learning opportunities to support the growth of teachers in UDL, formative assessment and data analysis.

- Articulation of high expectations form the principal’s vision that P.S. 153 is a school where every child wants to attend and every parent dreams of their child attending. At the heart of the principal’s message is that every adult needs to support the academic and social development of every child by developing a rigorous curriculum and safe environment. Frequent classroom observations, effective feedback to teachers and inquiry teamwork reinforce school-wide expectations resulting in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations.

- Regularly scheduled parent workshops promote active engagement by parents in their children’s education, including detailed explanations of the Common Core Learning Standards with explanations of specific strategies that parents can use to help their children succeed. Parents feel they are welcome in the school and are given many opportunities to partner in their children’s education. One example of such a partnership includes writing celebrations where parents are invited to celebrate their child’s published work.

- Teacher teams and staff embrace a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students. Student work samples include meaningful and actionable feedback with explicit next steps. The students, themselves, stated that the feedback they receive helps them to do well and that they are provided opportunities to both peer, as well as, self-assess. This allows students to be part of their own educational experience and prepared for the next level of work.