Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 200 Benson School
Elementary School 20K200
1940 Benson Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214

Principal: Javier Muñiz

Date of review: November 14, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Debra R. Lamb, Ed.D.
The Benson School is an elementary school with 1,335 students from Pre-Kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 1% Black, 22% Hispanic, 43% White, and 33% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94%.

### School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<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>Well Developed</td>
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<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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<th>School Culture</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>Focus</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<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>
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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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**Findings**
The great majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, during which pedagogical practice, assessment data, and student work is analyzed. These teams continually engage in distributed leadership practices.

**Impact**
Effective teacher leadership and integral instructional decision-making has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, improved pedagogical practice, increased student achievement for all, and increased mastery of learning goals.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Teachers serve on a variety of teams, both vertical and horizontal, that are anchored by the school-wide instructional focus on assessment in instruction. In these Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), teachers engage in collaborative inquiry that supports goals and strengthens their pedagogical practice. Based on data analysis, teams are able to make decisions about targeted small group instruction and academic intervention services. During team meetings, teachers regularly access end-of-unit student test performance data on the school’s website to track how well students are performing in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics. Principal Muñiz attributes the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Team with the school’s continued success in improving the quality of Individual Educational Plans (IEP) and transitioning students from more restrictive learning environments, such as a self-contained class, to Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes, Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETSS), and general education classes. Multiple teams to ensure IEPs are on target with appropriate services and achievable goals.

- Trend analysis during a grade three instructional team meeting demonstrated the team’s process for reviewing the unit’s performance-based assessment (PBA) data. The team’s discussion of student work samples focused on student misunderstandings of narrative writing. Team members discussed how to strengthen dialogue and other descriptive details such as using temporal words and phrases, sequencing events, establishing situations, and providing concluding statements. Team members agreed that using exemplar pieces throughout the grade has been beneficial. They revisited the informative writing rubric and discussed domain-specific and linking words. They also discussed switching the formative assessment opinion piece to another entry point.

- Rotation of team roles has tapped into the talents of teachers and has strengthened leadership development across the school. Teachers said they use each other as resources and regularly turnkey professional development. For example, the computer teacher’s participation in a train-the-trainer Promethean professional development program enabled her to support the integration of interactive whiteboard technology into her colleagues’ lessons.
Findings
School leaders consistently convey high expectations to the entire staff and provide high quality training to help meet these expectations. A culture for learning systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students and provides clear, focused feedback and guidance supports to address student needs.

Impact
School leaders consistently foster a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations for student achievement. These high expectations ensure that all students own their educational experience and prepare for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- Communication of high expectations to staff is inclusive of training and a system of accountability. The principal’s message on the school’s eChalk website states, “We believe that these high expectations should include the development of academic rigor, higher order thinking skills, problem solving abilities, self-discipline and civic responsibility.” During classroom visits, references by teachers to instructional routines are well known by their students. Enrichment activities are available to students for higher-order thinking following task completion. Students are aware of next learning steps and are able to articulate why they are in differentiated groups. To support coherent implementation of school-wide expectations, assistant principals model high-level questioning and discussion techniques.

- Teachers of ICT classes have received extensive professional development on the six co-teaching models, which they actively implement. “Teachers understand that English Language Learners (ELLs) and special education students are held to the same high standards as general education students,” said Principal Muñiz.

- Teachers and school-based support service providers strategically engage in thoughtful discussions of pedagogical and intervention practices that have contributed to the increased academic progress of students. “There are processes in place to be reflective about decisions made by teacher teams and individual teachers to strategically revise curricular materials, instructional practices, and the use of resources to support continuous student and school improvement,” said Principal Muñiz. Assistant principals closely monitor and actively support the work of teacher teams. “They guide us and help us to succeed,” said one teacher of support she has received from school administrators. “They tell us what we can do if the curriculum doesn’t work. It’s a learning opportunity.”
Additional Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in the school’s curricula and academic tasks, which are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects. Curricular and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
Through rigorous tasks requiring learners to demonstrate their thinking, all students have access to the curricula, are cognitively engaged, and learn at a high level.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) chart to develop or modify tasks that require the application of increasingly complex thinking to new situations. Lesson plans incorporate tasks requiring real-world application of higher-order thinking skills to contextual situations. For example, a fifth-grade mathematics lesson plan incorporated decimal computation practice through real-world scenarios of bank deposits and withdrawals associated with accurate maintenance of checkbook balances. A fourth-grade lesson plan introduced the concept of plagiarism before the production and publishing of student animal research projects.

- Teachers receive ongoing professional development to plan lessons that incorporate higher-order questioning and discussion activities, requiring students to think, reason, analyze, predict, estimate, and problem solve. “We focused a lot on main idea with flexible, differentiated student groups, and moved students from reading analysis to close reading groups,” said a teacher. Teachers stated that ReadyGEN does not adequately address the needs of ELLs or special education students, and therefore time is dedicated during teacher team meetings to modifying lessons with visuals, graphic organizers, scaffolds, and technology. Revisions to the ReadyGEN and GOMath! programs are documented in teacher binders during a curriculum mapping process conducted in their PLCs.

- A school-wide decision to supplement ReadyGEN with multi-sensory approaches to explicit phonics instruction yields improved student language and literacy skills. Teachers receive training in Orton-Gillingham strategies and Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes. Teachers implement core instruction every morning and engage in pull-out groups every afternoon using Lindamood-Bell’s programs, which address concept imagery to support oral and written language comprehension and critical thinking, symbol imagery, phonological and orthographic processing in reading and spelling, and phoneme sequencing to verify sounds within words in reading, spelling and speech. A teacher remarked that using time to support student achievement “…is about thinking outside the box.”
Additional Findings

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and are influenced by the Danielson Framework for Teaching as well as a common and coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies across classrooms provide multiple entry points, high-quality supports and extensions for all learners.

Impact
Teaching strategies engage all learners in appropriately challenging tasks and student work products that demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use backwards planning as a way of thinking purposefully about curricular planning so that students make appropriate connections, make sense of, and use discrete knowledge and skills in context. With the use of guided reading strategies and extensive visuals, teachers said that they noticed significant improvements in the way that students engage with text. Grade three teachers stated that they encourage students to use highlighters when key details are identified during close reading of text. Close reading strategies are incorporated in lesson plans with students interpreting difficult passages by responding to text-dependent questions and engaging in text-based conversations.

- Though teachers have received professional development on the six models of co-teaching, parallel teaching is the most prevalent model used in the school’s ICT classrooms. During reader’s workshop, co-teachers in a grade one ICT class engaged students in comparing the structure of informational text to literary text. Following a whole-group focus on key vocabulary, teachers divided the class into two parallel groups and taught the same content. Teachers subsequently divided students into a close reading group, a reading analysis group, and an extension group where students used a T-chart to develop their own text-based questions and answers, such as, “How does a bat fly? It uses its wings.”

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles are used to create multiple pathways to achieve instructional goals, implement teaching methods, and design materials that are adapted for different learners, while holding all students to the same standard. For example, in a grade four dual language class, domain-specific vocabulary and other key information is posted in both English and Russian, which is consistent with the UDL principle of promoting cross-linguistic understanding. “We incorporated native language instruction, paired children with buddies, and put systems in place for oral checks,” said teachers. “The biggest task was building background knowledge and looking at student writing to see what they could produce,” said an English as a Second Language teacher.

- Across classrooms, students facilitate group conversations, questioning and providing feedback to one another. Grade four students in a computer class presented their animal research projects in PowerPoint on the Promethean Board and responded to questions from their peers. Peers then provided rubric-based feedback to the presenting students. Student choice is an important component in the school’s approach to student ownership of learning. In a mathematics class, grade five students worked independently or in pairs to choose one of six strategies to find decimal sums and differences in currency, which they shared with the rest of the class.
### Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessment  
**Rating:** Well Developed

### Findings

The great majority of 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 make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a school-wide progress monitoring tool developed in-house to assess the following skill categories: key ideas and details, craft and structure, integration of knowledge and ideas, and by-the-way words. Fluency is documented for each student by grade at the beginning of the year, mid-year, and end-of-year, providing a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers use the PBA results to complete information sheets identifying student strengths and weaknesses. Teachers also comment on overall class trends and implications for small group planning.

- To check for understanding during classroom activities, teachers use exit slips, student self-reflections, and targeted questioning techniques. For example, while fifth-grade students worked independently in a mathematics class, their teacher circulated the class asking each student to show her one strategy that they used to complete the assigned task. Teachers use teacher-created checklists to record anecdotal information about student strengths, weaknesses and progress toward reaching stated goals for the purpose of making instructional decisions. Teachers submit the checklists to administration with a summary list of students who need more intensive interventions. Based on this information, teachers receive frequent feedback from the administration on implementing varied strategies and next steps. At the end of the year, administration analyzes the number of students performing at the lowest proficiency levels and make comparisons with the number of students each teacher has recommended for more intensive intervention.

- Student mastery of learning goals is shared on an ongoing basis with students. For example, a poster labeled “Chapter Three Mid-Chapter Checkpoint” in a grade five classroom reflects whole-class progress in adding and subtracting decimals. Each student’s name is listed as they have demonstrated mastery in such skills as place value positions, comparing decimals, identifying place value and rounding, and subtracting decimals with regrouping. Teachers have created color-coded graphs that break down the PBA results into strengths (green) and weaknesses (red).

- Students engage in self-reflection and peer-assessment practices. For example, prior to submission for grading of a project, students in grade three used a checklist to ensure that they stated an introduction, created a problem, introduced characters, used dialogue and details, used temporal words, and stated a conclusion. In grade four, students used a common rubric to rate the presenter’s content, writing mechanics, use of technology, and presentation skills for their animal research projects.