Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Elsa Ebeling

Elementary School K208

4801 Avenue D
Brooklyn
NY 11203

Principal: Nakoley Renville

Date of review: April 30, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins
The School Context

Elsa Ebeling School is an elementary school with 463 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 92% Black, 3% Hispanic, 4% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.12%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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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>
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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>Proficient</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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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>
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Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
The school leader consistently and continually communicates high expectations and training for professional collaboration and instructional excellence to teachers through utilization of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Effective communication with parents fosters successful partnerships toward expectations connected to college and career paths.

Impact
As a result of the school leader’s and staff’s high levels of expectation and culture of trust and commitment, teachers, parents, and students share mutual accountability for ensuring all students progress.

Supporting Evidence
- Tools such as professional learning calendars; a teachers’ document web-based share site; state-of-the-school monthly reports; utilization of the Danielson Framework for Teaching to train and evaluate teacher performance; the principal’s open-door policy; and observation visits result in consistent feedback that specifies high expectations for teaching and learning. Teacher access to State of the School Report apprises staff of expectations around assessments, student work, lesson planning, school events, data, and areas of celebration resulting in a school culture that is rich in knowledge sharing, mutual support, and embedded accountability. In addition, the online teachers’ document share site created by the principal to foster collaboration and transparency among faculty and staff members enables all faculty and staff access to important professional information. Teachers can download pedagogic resources, articles, instructional action plans, and communicate with each other setting higher standards to achieve expectations.

- Parent engagement workshops offered to all parents by teachers every Tuesday afternoon provide families with specific strategies to use at home in math, English Language Arts, and content areas. This practice further supports reciprocal communication that is also addressed at Curriculum Night. The administration and teachers ensure families receive handbooks outlining policies, procedures, and expectations; monthly newsletters; and class notices. Parents serve as Learning Leaders and participate in Parent Corps to support the school-wide academic expectations to ensure students are prepared to meet the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. Additionally, they receive report cards, progress reports, emails, and phone calls that inform of student progress and performance. Parents say the principal and teachers are good communicators and receptive to their ideas, fostering partnerships that support the progress of their children. Parents are knowledgeable about school-wide goals.

- Teachers convey high expectations to students via effective systems that reinforce academic behaviors. Clearly articulated expectations for learning help students to set goals for future success. Feedback to all students from teachers provides next steps to improve upon their work and progress. Students know what they must do to meet expectations. For example, students spoke confidently about academic and future goals. They conduct research on a college or university of interest, stimulating aspirations to attend Harvard, Cornell, Yale, Columbia, Duke, and NYU to become a doctor, lawyer, professional baseball player, engineer, or astronaut. To quote a teacher, “We need to plant that seed [expectations] so deep that they will succeed in college and careers”.

K208 Elsa Ebeling: April 30, 2015
Findings
Teacher pedagogy centers on an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across most classrooms, multiple entry points are consistently provided to enable all students access to learning tasks and student work products.

Impact
Informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, all students receive whole and small group instruction designed to challenge and stimulate higher-order thinking. However, in the vast majority of classrooms, tasks and teachers’ questions did not elicit high levels of thinking, discussion, or opportunities to actively participate.

Supporting Evidence
- The school’s belief about how students learn best is reflected in teachers’ use of data to group students, prioritize clear learning objectives, and lessons supported by student use of graphic organizers, manipulatives, technology, and demonstrations. Creating multiple entry points to differentiate content, process, or products was evidenced in students’ work products. For example, during a fourth grade English Language Arts lesson, students engaged in differentiated tasks to analyze and summarize the text. One group of students worked individually to write about the main idea and then use a graphic organizer to summarize the text. Another group of students worked in pairs “buddy reading” to locate details to complete a graphic organizer. The third group worked with their teacher using accountable talk stems to discuss details of the story. Two English language learner students used a computer to discuss details of the story. Two English language learner students used a computer to discuss details of the story.

- To promote thinking and rigorous habits teachers incorporate practices anchored in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* Domain Three: Questioning and Discussion Techniques. Pedagogical focus supported by the use of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) matrix, accountable talk stems, and *Growth Mindset* questions guide the development of higher-order thinking and participation. In a third grade classroom, the teacher posed questions to facilitate understanding of characterization using the story *Knots on a Counting Rope*. Open-ended questions such as “What are some examples?”, “Why is that a feeling and not a trait?”, and “What is the character’s motivation?” fostered opportunities for students to articulate reasoning, reflect on their thinking, as well as analyze and evaluate elements of the story.

- In a fifth grade classroom, entry into the lesson included a combination of DOK-leveled questions focused on the importance of preserving earth. In turn, students worked in groups to respond to a set of questions crafted to deepen understanding of text leading to high levels of participation and discussion. Conversely, in four classrooms visited, probing and thought-provoking questions that stimulate strategic thinking were limited. As observed during visits, teachers’ questions included, for example, “Do we all agree with that?” or a series of recall questions in the re-teach of numeracy skills missed opportunities for students to elaborate and explain, resulting in conflicting conversation. A lesson to engage students in distinguishing between the concepts of *needs and wants* promoted high levels of thinking shared between students during ‘turn and talk’. However, teacher-to-student interactions hampered higher levels of thinking, participation, and discussion for all students.
Additional Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and school leaders and faculty have integrated instructional shifts to promote college and career readiness. Academic tasks consistently are designed to stimulate rigorous habits and higher-order skills in all subjects for all students.

Impact
The purposeful decision to implement curricula that incorporates instructional shifts is ensuring coherence across classrooms that embeds rigorous habits and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- Units of study across content areas integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Planned activities require students to engage in multi-step problem solving, accountable talk, informational writing, cite text-based evidence, and use content-specific vocabulary. Pacing calendars align science and social studies scope and sequence across the grades.

- The implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards-aligned programs, ReadyGen and Math in Focus, allow for the development of a common lens and methodology for a unified approach to instruction aimed toward college and career readiness skills. As such, lessons include academic tasks with opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking within planned tasks that emphasize rigorous habits. An example of this is a fourth grade module on reading analysis whereby all students have opportunities and multiple sources to activate content and skills that develop conceptual understandings of scientific phenomenon.

- The staff purposefully focuses curricula on the instructional shifts in writing to increase academic rigor including using more details to make thinking visible, infusing descriptive words to stimulate the readers' senses, increasing the length of pieces, and the use of tier-two vocabulary to express thoughts clearly in writing. Written communication skills that are grade- and age-appropriate are evident in student writing displayed in student work folders, corridors, and classrooms across the school.
Findings
Teachers across classrooms use common assessments aligned with the school's curricula to determine student progress toward grade-level goals.

Impact
The school's alignment of assessments to curricula coupled with ongoing analysis informs adjustments in lesson planning and instruction to meet the needs of all learners and to provide actionable feedback concerning student achievement.

Supporting Evidence
- The school analyzes a plethora of data to determine student progress and support teacher practice. The use of common assessments include, but are not limited to, the New York State English Language Arts and Mathematics results; baseline, pre- and post-unit assessments, rubrics, ReadyGen performance-based series assessments; Math in Focus benchmark assessments; and Fountas and Pinnell reading level and running record assessments. Compiled data and aggregated results inform modifications to unit plans such as incorporating learning centers, technology-based supports, and grouping of students by levels as measured by rubrics. Staff identifies students’ strengths and challenges with next steps, provides them with actionable feedback, to meet the needs of diverse learners. In addition, student work displayed in classrooms, on bulletin boards in corridors, and in work folders reviewed evidenced feedback from teachers aligned with the language of rubrics. Hence, actionable feedback highlighted areas of strength such as, "You included good details" and learning next steps. For example, "Check your spelling and capitalization".

- Teachers use common assessments to monitor reading progress school-wide. Information from quarterly evaluations is used to plan small group instruction and to identify students for intervention services because they are not making progress. For instance, Fountas and Pinnell data consequently informs Response To Intervention services (RTI), provided by cluster teachers, classroom teachers, Special Education Teacher Support Services (SETTS) teacher, and the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. Targeted instruction is based on areas of challenge in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Student RTI Action Plans, a commonly used template system, delineates support given to students over an instructional block-cycle of four weeks. Plans reviewed indicate groups of students are seen five times on a weekly basis, receive targeted literacy instruction, and guided practice, namely in the skills of making prediction and inference strategies. Subsequently, students are re-tested and growth was evident.

- In math, teachers use the Math in Focus benchmark assessment to adjust the unit and plan for small group instruction. Teachers of third, fourth, and fifth grades administer the Performance Series to assess students’ progress throughout the school year. End of unit assessments are used to monitor progress toward grade level goals.
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**  
The majority of teachers engage in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributive leadership processes are in place.

**Impact**  
The work of the teacher teams has resulted in promoting the achievement of school goals, implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, improved teacher practice, and distributive leadership structures that allow teachers to have voice in key decisions about curricula and teaching practice.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers engage in collaborative inquiry to further teachers' capacity in curriculum mapping and unit plan design that align with the instructional programs and the Common Core Learning Standards. Instructional documents such as unit plans, lesson plans, and teacher team action plans evidence that aligns with instructional shifts and school goals. For instance, in response to math data that indicates students across the school are having difficulty attaining grade-level standards, as measured by the New York State Math Assessment, the school implements a Math Basics program to promote fluency. Teachers structure classroom time each morning to build automaticity and accuracy with simple calculations to better students' ability to navigate the complexity of multi-step problems. Students reported they work through number operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division for a few minutes every day because it is important to know math skills in order to do harder problems.

- Grade-level teacher teams meet during weekly scheduled common prep periods and the afternoon Professional Development Mondays to engage in professional work. During planning time, the teachers collaboratively engage in discourse about successes and challenges experienced during the implementation of specific lessons. As observed in a second grade team meeting, teachers use a Looking At Student Work (LASW) protocol to spotlight students' strengths and challenges based on a performance-based writing assessment. While teachers discussed growth areas like use of conventions, sentence structure, and topic development, they also focused on teaching strategies they believed would improve student performance. Planned scaffolds included direct instruction to guide students in developing related questions as well as teaching students to structure open-ended questions.

- Professional learning meetings are teacher led. Teacher teams meet each week in different configurations, including grade, vertical, professional, and RTI, and for various purposes. All teams use the Teacher Document Share Site to upload agendas, minutes, next steps, and action plans. Teachers are encouraged to make instructional decisions. Teachers have voice in the selection of supplemental resources, adjustments to the sequence of curricula, and decisions around professional learning opportunities. As such, distributive structures in place strengthen teacher capacity and student learning across the school.

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K208 Elsa Ebeling: April 30, 2015  
6