Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Children's School
Elementary School K372
512 Carroll Street
Brooklyn
NY 11215

Principal: Arthur Mattia

Date of review: January 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Kathleen LeFevre
The School Context

P. 372K is a K-6 school with 199 students from Kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 24% Black, 23% Hispanic, 48% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 74% special education students. Boys account for 78% of the students enrolled and girls account for 22%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Instructional Core

**To what extent does the school…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Well Developed</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>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>Proficient</td>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
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**To what extent does the school…**

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<tr>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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>Well Developed</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction and create opportunities for professional learning and support for staff. The school partners with families to support student progress toward meeting academic, behavioral and social expectations.

**Impact**
The supportive structures established by the school to achieve high expectations result in a culture in which accountability for student progress is reciprocal between all stakeholders.

**Supporting Evidence**
- The school provides clear lines of verbal and written communication to families to deepen their understanding of academic, social and behavioral expectations and provide feedback to parents on their children’s progress toward meeting these expectations. Parents were able to report on the multiple ways the school communicates with them, including emails and phone calls from staff and the Parent Coordinator, School blasts, the school’s website, monthly newsletters from staff to inform parents about the current units of study, flyers, communication notebooks with input from the classroom teachers and related service providers, and homework sheets which delineate the homework expectations for the week. Parents speak to how they could use the mathematics website to support their understanding of school assignments and the communication notebooks to support their child in learning skills, such as putting three items in sequential order.

- There are clear norms in place for teacher collaboration and structures are in place to hold members accountable. For example, The Children’s School Staff Handbook sets forth instructional norms that emphasize that teachers are equals in the classroom; both general and special education teachers modify lessons for students with different learning styles and children with special needs. Across classrooms, it was evident that general and special education teachers had co-planned lessons and were familiar with modifications to the lessons as they conferred with individual students and small groups. In a class for students with autism, for example, the speech teacher, classroom teacher and educational assistant led a Joint Action Routine (JARS) that included a shared reading of an adapted book about winter using picture symbols and a routine of preparing hot chocolate.

- Parents expressed that the school has in place a strong collaborative culture that respects the different ways of learning of their children and values each of their children as an important member of the school. Parents spoke about the inclusive culture of the school and that they could feel that their children were safe because at the school, there is “no stigma attached to having a disability.” The current Learning Environment Survey feedback indicates that 96% of teachers and staff are satisfied with the school culture.

- To ensure high expectations, the school has in place a Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Team that monitors the progress of students with autism to determine whether they are ready to transition to the less restrictive integrated co-teaching (ICT) program. This year two (2) students have moved to the ICT site. Parents reported that this year there is increased “collaboration between the sites that is benefitting all students.”
Findings
School leaders and teachers use common assessments and student work to measure progress toward instructional goals and to make curricular adjustments. Actionable feedback to meet all students' learning needs varies across some classrooms.

Impact
The school’s use of assessment data results in ongoing refinement of curriculum and monitoring of student progress, however in some classes teachers sometimes miss opportunities to raise student awareness of their next learning steps towards mastering their goals.

Supporting Evidence
• The school has in place systems to capture student data and to monitor student progress in meeting academic goals. The school has created its own database known as “Filepro,” which captures assessments for mathematics end of unit, running records, word study in all grades along with state results in grades three through five. School leaders and teachers use Filepro to determine where possible shifts in instruction may be required and to identify students who are considered “at risk” for Academic Intervention Services (AIS) that include Fundations, Structured Methods in Language Education (SMILE), and targeted vocabulary development. For students with autism, probes conducted over the course of each day are recorded on daily tracking sheets for individual students, that include the use of (Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS and Individualized Educational Plans IEP skills; data gathered from probes are reviewed by teachers and related service providers at team meetings.

• Teachers use data about student progress and patterns in incorrect answers, skills gaps, and learning needs to support purposeful grouping of students. Across classes, instructional grouping and re-teaching of concepts showed an alignment between the data and the instructional practices.

• The school has shifted to using the K-5 Teachers College Reading and Writing Project rubrics to ensure direct alignment of the rubrics to common core aligned units of study. The rubrics for all grades provide coherence to the school-wide picture of student progress in the different components of genres of informational, narrative and opinion writing. School leaders and teacher teams use the rubric along with student work to identify gaps in skills at different grade levels and to adjust what is being emphasized at the earlier grades to address these gaps. Reading and writing rubrics were evident across classrooms; a review of student readers’ notebooks showed extensive teacher comments that included actionable feedback. At one of the school’s sites, student work products showed inconsistent teacher feedback with some teachers using specific description of what students had done in accordance with the rubrics but with vague suggestions of next steps. Some students were not clear about their next learning steps. This prevents some students from receiving meaningful information on what they need to improve in order to be fully engaged in the learning process.
Additional Findings

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The school provides a curriculum that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and content standards and that strategically integrates the instructional shifts, resulting in coherence across grades and subject areas. Curricula and performance tasks are refined using student data to ensure that all students have access to the curriculum.

Impact
Strategic planning and revising of the curricula has led to coherent curricula that provide multiple entry points to engage all learners in academic tasks that promote college and career readiness and that meet the needs of high achieving students.

Supporting Evidence
- The Academic Cabinet comprised of school leaders, grade level teachers and specialists meet twice a month to revise current units of study using backward design and to develop new units of study aligned to the CCLS. The Cabinet has placed a focus on the current New York State Frameworks scope and sequence in social studies and how to best integrate it into teaching practices across content areas. As a result, in some classes it was observed that the content of Colonial Times was integrated with informational writing in literacy, including note taking and drafting a report.

For students who are alternately assessed, teachers have developed thematic, age appropriate units of study and have continued to refine and extend these units over the past three years. A review of the curriculum maps implemented in the (Autism Spectrum Disorder) ASD classes showed fully developed units of study overviews, weekly plans, pre-and post-assessments, CCLS aligned performance tasks, unit descriptions, resources, adapted books written by the teachers using Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), vocabulary and songs. Common core aligned programs Equals (Mathematics), Unique (Social Studies and Science content to support literacy) and Attainment (Literacy) were purposefully implemented to support the units of study across content areas. For example, while the Attainment curriculum provides students with rewritten novels such as Holes modified to their level and questions at the low levels of Depth of Knowledge (DOK), the teachers engage students in read-alouds of the actual novel and opinion writing based on the text.

- Across content areas, teachers revise and adapt curriculum maps provided to them. In Science, for example, a review of the school’s unit plans and lessons demonstrates that the teachers have extended and supported the Full Option Science System (FOSS) curriculum; academic tasks in these units reflect a range of teaching strategies to ensure that the needs of all learners are met. Academic tasks for the highest achieving students include individual research and informational essays across content areas. The curriculum as revised identifies the core concepts that students are expected to master, and provides support and extension explorations and experiments for students. Observed science lessons are evidence of curricular coherence across school sites for the students in the ICT classes and the students in the ASD classes.

- The school’s arts curricula, aligned to the Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, integrates the CCLS and instructional shifts. For example, as part of the dance curriculum, students collaborate to create and perform dances, while student audience members collaborate to provide written and spoken responses to the performance of their peers, using discipline-specific vocabulary.
Findings
Teaching practices across classrooms are aligned to the curricula and reflect the school’s core beliefs about how students learn. These practices include leveled texts, think-alouds, flexible grouping, visual aids, structured routines and targeted skills instruction.

Impact
Lessons reflect purposefully designed multiple entry points that result in increased student engagement and demonstration of higher order thinking in student work.

Supporting Evidence
- To support all students in mastering academic content, flexible and purposeful grouping based upon the needs and skills of the students is a consistent practice across all classrooms. Classes were observed in which teachers were delivering small group targeted skills instruction in reading to support the social studies content. The school implements extensive academic intervention with specific skills foci for all students who are showing signs of struggle in a class. As a result of a school-wide emphasis on “doing whatever it takes for students to succeed”, during the 2013-2014 school year, fourteen (14) students were declassified.

- Across classrooms teachers use instructional strategies, such as leveled texts, graphic organizers, vocabulary prompts, word banks, sentence stems, real life objects and picture symbols, to consistently provide multiple entry points for learners to complete their tasks. For example in an English language arts lesson, a graphic organizer was provided to ensure accessibility while the teacher modeled a think-aloud and used scaffolded questions to elicit the meaning of a vocabulary word “trenchers” in the historical fiction they were reading. In another class, the teacher used real life objects and picture symbols as well as print words to support acquisition of vocabulary associated with winter and summer clothing. Across classrooms in the ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) site, students used real life objects, (Picture Exchange Communication System) PECS, augmentative communication devices (AAC), and a word bank on the Smart Board to respond to questions about passages read to them.

- Across classrooms, there was evidence of strategic use of structured routines that included individual student workstations, rotation through small group learning stations that supported the content, and transition from one component to another of the workshop model. The use of the routines maximized the time students were engaged in academic learning. Routines such as morning meeting from the Responsive Classroom and classroom energizers were thoughtfully introduced in lessons with a positive impact on the social-emotional progress of students and the amount of increased time on the academic tasks.
**Quality Indicator:**

| 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Well Developed |

**Findings**
Teacher teams meet on a consistent basis to systematically analyze classroom data, student work and curricular tasks. Teachers share best practices for supporting the needs of all students and make adjustments to curricular tasks to ensure accessibility of the curriculum to all learners.

**Impact**
The work of teacher teams has strengthened teachers’ instructional capacity, resulting in instructional cohesiveness and improved achievement for all students.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Across the school sites, there are consistent systems in place for teacher teams to look at student data and reviewing existing practices. For example, over the course of the month, the speech teachers meet at least once with each classroom teacher and cluster teacher to review Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) data, as captured on a school-wide data form. A monthly communication information log captures the levels of each student with start dates of each phase along with changes noted and next steps.

- Teacher teams analyze assessment data, unit plans and instructional practices that have improved the mastery of goals for groups of students. For example, at an observed ICT team meeting, in preparation for an upcoming unit of study on informational writing, members came prepared with a summary sheet of how the Grade 4 students scored on each component of the Rubric for Opinion Writing. Teachers were able to use the data to identify patterns where students were having difficulties and noted that in the next unit, there was a need to emphasize strategies to help students strengthen skills in such areas as punctuation or endings that connected back to the text. Teachers reported that an invaluable contribution of the team meeting to their practice was that they were able to identify the strengths of the students that they may have previously overlooked.

- Team meetings involve all constituents of the school community in reviewing data and collaboratively planning next steps to ensure the success of individual students. For example, at an observed team meeting for students with autism, speech teachers and a classroom teacher reviewed the communication levels of each student as evident in extensive data collection of Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) acquisition; data was used to determine movement of students to the next phase and to identify strategies to support students in their targeted areas of need.

- Extensive professional learning for staff is shared at teacher team meetings and serves to strengthen pedagogical practices of teachers. School leaders provide time and substitutes for teachers to attend professional development so that they are able to successfully implement the different curriculum used at the school. Teachers reported that the professional development gave them the “confidence to make adjustments to the pacing of lessons, modifications and use of manipulatives”. To ensure fidelity of academic interventions that support students in learning to read, twenty one (21) teachers participated in Structured Methods in Language Education (SMiLE) and seventeen (17) teachers in Fundations; as a result, there has been an increase in the number of students making gains, as evidenced by Running Records data.