Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brooklyn Landmark
Elementary School K599
251 McDougal Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233

Principal: Robin Williams-Davson
Date of review: November 6, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Superintendent Mauricière de Govia
Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School (BLES) is an elementary school with 180 students from grade pre k through grade 3. The school population comprises 75% Black, 21% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

### School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school…</strong></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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<td>Proficient</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>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>
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<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td><strong>To what extent does the school…</strong></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>
<td>Celebration</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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<td><strong>To what extent does the school…</strong></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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<td>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

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<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 and all other staff consistently communicate high expectations for student learning, to all students and their families. The students and families are well supported towards meeting the expectations.

Impact
Effective communication of high expectations across the school results in partnerships with families that support all students in making progress towards moving to the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that high expectations are embedded into the founding Landmark Values which are L-leadership, A-accountability, N-new voices, D-dedication, M-make good choices, A-always excellent, R-resilient, and K-kind community school. High expectations also “live” in school-wide student policies and structures such as No Opting Out, where students are not allowed to say “I don’t know” and “get away” with not answering a question. It was observed across classrooms that teachers circled back to students to hold them accountable to answering questions. Students also were observed responding to S-sit up L-listen A-ask questions N-nod T-track the speaker, which is “sit up, listen, ask and answer, nod your head, and track the speaker” when participating in lessons. The school also names a student as a Grit Master when he or she exhibits commitment to relentlessly accomplishing goals. Students voiced appreciation for SLANT and Grit Master as they, “Help us to be better.”

- Parents and students shared that they think that the teachers and principal want students to be successful in school so that all students can go to college and acquire a career. A school opportunity that supports this career directed sentiment is that students are able to apply for community service jobs such as safety patrol, office assistant, and BLES morning greeter, via a job application that provides a template for a resume which indicates information such as the scholar’s name, address, talents, achievements, awards, and references. Students are also expected to answer questions such as, “Why would you like to have this job?” “What have you done in the past that will help you do this job well?” “What strengths do you possess to help you do this job well?” Scholars are paid in ‘scholar dollars’ for their job.

- The principal shared that, “We believe that parents are our partners.” The 2014 -15 Brooklyn Landmark Elementary School Parent Engagement Plan chronicles several opportunities for parents to participate in their children’s education via workshops, websites like Edmodo, the school website, and the BLES Parent University. The latter is designed to engage parents in the college experience while fostering parent accountability in their children’s education. Courses include Common Core 101, My Differently Abled Child, Healthy Happy Home, Fit Fun Food, College and Career Bound, English as a Second language, General Equivalency Diploma Courses, Stress Management, and Parent Yoga. There is also a BLES Parent Rubric that parents use to assess their level of involvement.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices and strategies articulate a set of beliefs about how students learn best and consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Opportunities for high levels of student thinking indicated by discussions. The incorporation of the instructional shifts was evident in lessons across classrooms.

Impact
As a result of the school wide shared beliefs, practices, and strategies used by teachers across classrooms, work products and discussions by all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, reflect high levels of student thinking and engagement in challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that “…instructional shifts are incorporated in explicit lessons that are modeled, and differentiated…teachers provide regular opportunities for close reading and engagement in academic vocabulary and building math fluency.” It was observed that the 150 minute literacy block engages students in shared reading, guided reading, vocabulary building, and writing. In a second grade class, students were observed following along with a SMART board projected text during a shared reading activity about defining vocabulary words in context. In a first grade classroom, students were placed in groups with leveled texts for guided reading. Graphic organizers were used to support them as they read. In each classroom teachers posted The Steps for Success which is a list of tasks for the students to achieve. For example some steps are: 1. Read the text, 2. Look for repeating words, 3. Use context clues to find the meaning.

- In some classrooms it was evident that teachers create access to all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners by providing leveled texts, re-written text, graphic organizers, rubrics, and through the effective use of paraprofessionals in classrooms where they facilitate student groups. These elements were evident in a third grade Integrated Co-teaching class where the special education teacher utilized a modified text and graphic organizer to engage her group in the same task as the general education population.

- The principal shared that the school’s instructional focus is student ownership of questioning and discussion. She stated that the expectation is that in classrooms “…scholars have multiple opportunities to talk during class discussions…participate in partner and whole class discussions…take ownership of their questioning and discussion in the classroom by developing their own questions.” In multiple classrooms students were observed working diligently through guided reading and writing. Furthermore, in some classrooms teachers employed brief turn and talks to support comprehension. Students were also observed responding to teacher questions, such as, “How does the picture help you?” and “What details from the text support your answer?” These questions supported teacher to student interactions. However, there was little evidence of consistent student to student communication that fostered questioning, discussion, and student ownership over conversations.
Additional Findings

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core and the instructional shifts, and are refined using student work and data.

Impact
Purposeful decision making at the school level promotes access to Common Core aligned curricula for diverse learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to ensure that all learners are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- As a school in its second year, the principal along with the founding teachers chose Ready Gen for grades k-2 and Expeditionary Learning for grade 3 for their English Language Arts curriculum. Go Math was selected for grades k-3 for their math curriculum. They chose this curricula as it provided the alignment to the Common Core State Standards. For example the literacy curriculum shows the infusion of social studies and science and a balance between fiction and non-fiction texts. Units of study and lessons plans highlight Common Core Standards such as, “Apply properties of operations as strategies to add and subtract” and “Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to compose opinion and explanatory pieces on math topics.” There is also integration of the instructional shifts via fluency practice and vocabulary building in lesson plans.

- It was observed that all teachers plan units of study using the Understanding by Design process. Teachers’ unit plans identify desired results, name the standards taught in the unit, surface interdisciplinary connections, state learning objectives, academic skills, essential questions, vocabulary, assessment evidence, the performance tasks, student self-assessments, the learning plan, lesson activities, and reflections. The unit plans provide the foundation directly connected to the lesson plans which indicate student groups, steps for success, the learning objective and strategies for differentiation of instruction for English Language Learners and students with disabilities, such as providing a more visual-based graphic organizer and using pictures to depict words. In some lesson plans teachers consider the needs of higher performers by adding extended tasks such as creating an informative book and providing peer support.

- Teachers modified the curriculum across grades to add more “reading rigor” due to 80% of students that were previously reading below grade level. Scholars were assessed as needing additional assistance with decoding and comprehension. In response to this data, the principal added a 50 minutes independent and guided reading component to the instructional day that is supported by lessons and texts from Reading A-Z, Uncommon School’s Instructional Handbook, classroom libraries, and IReady.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms teachers use assessments, rubrics, and a uniform grading policy to provide feedback about students’ performance across grades and content areas. Instruction reflects teachers’ use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact
Assessment data and structures used across classrooms inform students and teachers of all students’ learning needs, leading to teachers making effective adjustments that meet those needs.

Supporting Evidence
- The principal shared that assessments allow school stakeholders to “…keep track of learning and student progress…we only assess what we are teaching and assessing needs to occur throughout the lesson…assessments are to inform instruction and create next instructional steps”. In support of this sentiment, the school employs a robust set of assessments, including but not limited to Fountas and Pinnell, pre and post-tests, standards mastery unit assessments, tasks from Expeditionary Learning, and Running Records to generate feedback about student achievement. Assessments also occur in social studies and science via end of unit tests and performance tasks. Assessments are tracked as administered via a calendar that informs all stakeholders of their occurrence. There is also a standards tracker that monitors student achievement of the standards.

- There is a school-wide grading policy that ensures common rubrics in writing for all subject areas. A Teachers’ College rubric indicates the performance levels used to evaluate students’ work across the school, and grades are quantified as level 4:90-100, level 3: 80-89, level 2: 70-79, and level 1: 69 and below. When questioned about the grading policy, students were able to articulate their use of rubrics and the difference between being a level 1 versus a level 4 performer. Furthermore, the monitoring of student performance is consistent across the school and students receive progress reports that indicate their growth from assessment to assessment.

- Across all classrooms students were observed using the self-assessment tool of red, yellow, green, and purple. Red indicates, “I don’t know what to do.” Yellow indicates, “I need help.” Green indicates, “I’m okay.” Purple indicates, “I’ve got this and I can help others.” Students were observed seating themselves in the different color areas to get the help they needed. There were also times where teachers adjusted instruction to meet students’ needs, including re-directing students to sit in alternate areas, based on needs detected via ongoing assessment of their work during the class period.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: Proficient

Findings
Teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaboration and consistently analyze assessment data and student work. Distributive leadership structures are in place to support the inclusion of teachers in key decisions.

Impact
The work of teacher teams has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers, built leadership capacity and provided for teacher voice in key decisions, resulting in progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal firmly believes that teachers need to collaborate. The teachers’ schedule provides an opportunity for teachers to meet in grade teams 2 times a week. Each team meets with the instructional team once a week. Professional development occurs on Monday afternoons and provides additional opportunities for teacher collaboration. There is also common planning time embedded both formally and informally into the schedule. A review of meeting agendas and minutes indicates that teachers are focused on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards via the selected school-wide curricula for all content areas and in developing lessons that are based on the assessed needs of learners.

- Teachers were observed using the Teacher Data Analysis Form which captures the type of assessment administered, the standards assessed, the strengths and the weaknesses of students’ performance, the most challenging assessment items, the patterns and trends identified, the needed group setting for the student-whole, small, or individual, and questions such as “What will you do differently in the next few days?” “What re-teaching activities will you use?” “How will this data influence your lesson planning?” Teachers used this form to determine the next steps for student grouping, planning, and professional development needs. They reported that follow up assessments in reading, using Fountas and Pinnell, and in math, using Go Math, showed improved performance by many students, based on instructional adjustments arising from teacher’s analysis of item skills data and student work.

- There are several distributive leadership structures in place at the school. Each grade has a grade leader who advocates for the needs of the grade with administration and other instructional leads. Lead teachers open their classrooms to other teachers for intervisitations and professional learning opportunities. There is a calendar that captures the schedule of intervisitations for visits to the lead teachers. Teacher leadership is also evident as there are three “Model Teachers” at the school who assist with teacher coaching, planning, and professional development. There are also teachers who write grants, including the grant written to partner with Uncommon Schools, which support school-wide initiatives and programs.