Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 748 Brooklyn School for Global Scholars
Elementary School K748
1664 Benson Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11214

Principal: Ursula Annio

Date of review: February 9, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Debra R. Lamb, Ed.D.
The P.S. 748 Brooklyn School for Global Scholars is an elementary school with 583 students from grades pre-kindergarten through five. The school population comprises 0% Black, 20% Hispanic, 39% White, and 39% Asian, and 2% other students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 6% 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 95.3%.

### School Quality Criteria

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</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>Celebration</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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#### School Culture

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<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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#### Systems for Improvement

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<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
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<th>Rating:</th>
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<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>Focus</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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## Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks, embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects, and planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact
There is coherence across grades and subject areas that promote college and career readiness for all students. All learners must demonstrate their thinking. Individuals and groups of students have access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence
- The English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum designed by the school staff is a mixture of balanced literacy, interdisciplinary units, and the *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP)* units of study, which have been in use by this school since the school's opening in 2010. Instructional shifts are integrated to promote deep learning. For example, the school uses fictional characters to teach students about a non-fiction topic. This approach is modeled after the *Magic School Bus* series, a wonderful resource for non-fiction information gleaned by a fictional teacher and her students during school field trips. Biographies as well as fables/fooltales are incorporated to teach life lessons. Modules from the State's EngageNY website are used for mathematics which the principal said have been “pivotal in our math curriculum.” These modules are supplemented with *TERC Investigations in Number, Data, and Space®*, and *Contexts for Learning Mathematics*. The school’s social studies curriculum incorporates content from EngageNY, as well as *National Geographic* and *Discovery Education* websites.

- The curriculum includes opportunities for students make connections, like project-based learning. For example, grade 2 students have researched landmarks and built structures like the Empire State Building from recycled materials like cardboard and aluminum foil. An example of a curricula activity that required students to write from sources is the “Great Penny Debate,” where students engaged in debate about whether the United States should retire the penny as part of our currency. Students also researched social issues in Asian society and designed solutions to real-world problems. Technology is integrated to engage students in learning experiences that require them to construct knowledge. Enrichment programs, like the school's fairly new Lego Robotics initiative (teachers were trained in December) included an engineering-related task using robotics where grade 4 students built motorized tops for the purpose of analyzing the relationship between gear sizes and the amount of time the tops will spin.

- Initially, the school used Rubicon Atlas to manage its curriculum maps, but the staff did not like the structure of the maps on this web-based tool and began using a WikiSpace. Teachers have access to each other’s maps. “We’re very much into documenting the evolution of the curriculum maps as the school’s data team makes revisions or adds additional content and ensures vertical and horizontal alignment,” remarked the principal. “Our next step in curriculum mapping is to look at the strengths and weaknesses of each unit and what yielded the student outcomes. We will then apply these qualities to other units with strong outcomes.”
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<th>Area of Focus</th>
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<td><strong>Quality Indicator:</strong></td>
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**Findings**
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core. Distributed leadership structures are embedded in this school.

**Impact**
The school continues to strive for school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. There is effective teacher leadership and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Teacher teams meet twice weekly in addition to departmental meetings. A positive school-wide trend identified by teachers as a result of their work on teams is the improvement of accountable talk. The school’s teams have focused on math vocabulary to help students with comprehension and being able to explain their answers. A novice teacher on the team said that the sharing of ideas on the teams “…made me a better teacher.” The school’s data team has focused on incorporating more English as a second language (ESL) strategies to address the increase in the number of English language learners (ELLs). There are 91 ELLs this year versus 45 ELLs last year, primarily due to the school’s expansion to grade 5 this year. For example, teachers use the book *The Wedding of Q and U* by author Denise Dillon-Hreha to teach students how the letter Q is followed by the letter U in most words.

- The grade 3 teacher team meeting discussion focused on the mock English language arts (ELA) and math assessments they administered during the third and fourth week of January. Student work was divided into low-, middle-, and high-performing students and noticings were shared by teachers. A teacher said he chose student work from those students who usually score well in class but not on these assessments. “Students in the middle have better work habits than the high performing students,” said another teacher. “Some math errors resulted from rushing through reading the questions to get the math done because they know they are better at that, but are not using the strategies learned like underlining and re-reading the question to understand what it is asking,” commented another teacher. Teachers agreed that students were struggling with text-based evidence and that academic and test-taking behaviors needed to be the focus. They noticed that some students were struggling with character traits versus character feelings. Highlighted was the performance of ELL students, who did as well as students in the middle because they were using the learned strategies like citing evidence. Teachers noticed that students in the gifted & talented class were using a lot of prior knowledge and not citing text-based evidence or they would solve one part of a math problem and not the other part. They also acknowledged that the majority of students did not get the first question on the mock assessment right because it was a topic that had not yet been covered. However, the majority of students got the fraction question right because it was fresh in their minds.

- Teachers sit on the interview committee for new teachers. Representatives of each grade comprise the school’s data team, and are responsible for sharing data across grades and subjects. During Twisted Tuesdays and Wacky Wednesdays in March, teachers swap classrooms above/below their grade to better understand the skills needed for mastery.
Additional Findings

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<th>Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating: Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation, and ownership.

**Impact**

All learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The day’s instructional agenda on a whiteboard in a grade 5 classroom incorporates reading, writing, social studies, and science, as follows: “Good readers can share their thinking in book clubs by using textual evidence. Authors research and gather information for our feature articles by using graphic organizers. Historians can describe the reasons people explore and colonize new lands. Engineers are able to analyze the relationship between gear size and the amount of time the top will spin.” Multiple entry points are accomplished through purposeful grouping of students and the use of differentiated materials, tasks, and goals for varied learners. Groups and their topics in a grade 2 science class include: “Group 1—Balance, Force & Motion; Group 2—Solar System/Outer space; Group 3—Rocks & Soil; Group 4—Land & Water; and Group 5—Living Things.”

- Teachers use the workshop model daily and develop lessons using the backwards design method. Every class engages in a “Weekly Math Challenge” and “Problem of the Day.” Grade 5 students were working on the following Problem of the Day: “A café makes ten 8-ounce fruit smoothies. Each smoothie is made with 4 ounces of soy milk and 1.3 ounces of banana flavoring. The rest is blueberry juice. How much of each ingredient will be necessary to make the smoothies?” Using a strategy of converting decimals into fractions using the number of tenths and hundreds, all students understood that the café would need 40 ounces (4 x 10) of soy milk, 13 (1.3 x 10) ounces of bananas, and 27 ounces (2.7 x 10) of blueberry juice to make ten 8-ounce fruit smoothies, for a total of 80 ounces.

- Depth of Knowledge (DOK) Levels are used to categorize tasks according to the complexity of thinking required to successfully complete them. Administrators report noticeable improvement in the levels of questions teachers are asking, and now are focused on the level of student engagement for the group of new teachers. The principal explained, “We believe that engagement and investment in learning is part of student success.” Lesson plans incorporate essential questions to drive the learning and opportunities for students to express their learning in original ways. Students know that their projects will either be displayed or will be responsible for presenting it. For example, the teaching point in a grade 5 ELA class is, “I can analyze how an author explores multiple social issues within one text.” The teacher asks, “How do authors explore issues?” A student responds, “They start small. Many start with the back story. Characters are one story element. Teacher: “Why do we often see more than one social issue in a text?” Student: “Sometimes there’s racism and war because they’re linked.” Teacher: “Who is the racism towards?” Student: “The Jews and anti-Semitism.” Teacher: “How does that relate to the war?” Student: “Because of the Nazis.” The lesson continues with discussions of why issues like bias against a disability, peer pressure, bullying and ‘fitting in’ are often explored together.
Findings
Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use 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
Actionable and meaningful feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs and students are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence
- “Pre- and post-assessments are administered to get really good data on where students are,” said a teacher. Teachers track reading levels in September, November, January, March and June to identify those students reading above-, on-, and below-grade level. Leveled reading groups are formed based on this data. Mid-year assessments are administered in January. All units have culminating projects where students become familiar with speaking in public in front of parent attendees. Teachers provide rich feedback to students on their work and students provide feedback to each other, based on rubrics that are specific to the task or assignment. For example, a teacher’s feedback to a student who scored a 4 on a 4-point rubric measuring content, organization, and solution for a word problem assignment was as follows: “Glow (things done well): Great job using difficult numbers. Grow (something to work on): Your next step is to use an array to show doubling.” One classmate’s comments to another student: Glow: “I liked your book. You have a lot of details.” Grow: “Think about spelling more.”

- The data team’s priority student groups are ELLs and students with disabilities. The principal stated, “We’ve noticed so many things about their language skills and have added more experiences into the curriculum to address their needs.” The school projects an increase in the number of students achieving English proficiency as measured by the NYSESLAT assessment administered in the spring as well as an increase in reading levels. Teachers use a wide variety of strategies/tools to check for understanding, including but not limited to, oral checks, written reflections, the stoplight method and mid-workshop interruptions for stop & checks. Differentiated exit slips are used for small group work based on high, middle, and low student mastery. Teachers document and monitor individual student mastery using checklists specific to the standard-based skills taught. Students are aware of the Common Core Standards, and are able to tell you what their next steps are. “We couldn’t change the standards, but we could modify our scaffolds so more children will achieve success with the standards,” noted the principal.

- During regular conferencing sessions, students meet with teachers to discuss progress towards individual standards-based goals. “Goals tell us if we’ve mastered a skill,” said a student. “Even if we have the highest grade in the class, we get a new goal every 2-3 months.” Another student shared her goals: “To annotate the text more in reading, to infer how a character feels, and to tell the difference between perspective and points of view.” Another student added, “I’m working on trying to make the most of my free time and grabbing more details from the text…I’m aiming for three or four.” Teachers group students based on trends in the goals. Parents sign off every two months on goals in reading, writing, and mathematics.
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. The school successfully partners and communicates with families to support student progress to support high expectations. A culture for learning systematically communicates a set of high expectations for all students and provides effective feedback and guidance/advisement supports.

Impact
A culture of mutual accountability for high expectations exists in this school, which are connected to a path to college and career readiness. Students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- The school’s motto is “learning today, leading tomorrow.” Each teacher has a flash drive on which is a copy of the school’s publication entitled “A Guide to an Effective Classroom,” which outlines in detail with photographs the school’s expectations/practices for classroom organization, management, the daily schedule, the morning meeting, word walls, graphic organizers, anchor charts, reading workshop, close reading, independent/guided reading, reading comprehension strategies, text-dependent questions, math and writing assessments, rubrics, goal setting, lesson planning, differentiated instruction, reciprocal teaching, student work folders, technology use, project-based learning, and book clubs. Teachers take turns facilitating their team meetings, develop and present professional workshops based on their areas of expertise. Teacher mentors articulate with administration to plan monthly new teacher meetings, Lunch & Learns, and inter-visitations.

- “We have been focusing on developing patience, persistence, and productive struggle,” said the principal. The School wide Enrichment Model (SEM) is used, the major goal being the application of gifted education pedagogy to total school improvement. Through SEM, students self-select residency activities using preference sheets during multiple cycles during the school year. The activities are based on varying interests and talents of school staff, including such enrichment activities as yoga, dance, acting, improvisation, and cooking. For example, as part of their Latin Fusion and Expression (LFX) residency, students learned about Latin American historical dances from the Caribbean, like the Salsa, Bachata and Merengue. There are opportunities for students to serve the school community as “bucket fillers.” For example, the school has 5th graders mentoring 2nd graders as well as a peer mediation group. A student newsletter is in progress, to be called “The Truth.” Student government representatives said “We’re going to help do things we promised in our speeches.” Grade 5 students participate in academies based on some of the themes of middle schools that students will apply to. A grade 5 job fair focuses on such careers as law & government, journalism, and business. Partnerships enhance activities with a wide variety of organizations and field trips providing exposure to various topics.

- Teachers designed parent academy presentations on such topics as “Mathematical Shifts on the Road to Mathematical Proficiency” and “Building Independence in Reading Comprehension.” Of the monthly parent academies, a parent shared: “It keeps me apprised of what’s expected and keeps kids consistent with what’s taught in school.” Monthly newsletters inform parents about the current learning activities in their child’s classroom. Teachers are focused on promoting student independence and holding students accountable for their own learning. The parent of a special needs grade 4 student said, “This school caters to each student individually. My son takes the same test with no special privileges. They don't push him aside.”