Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 029Q
Elementary 25Q029
125-10 23 AVENUE
QUEENS
NY, 11356

Principal: Jill Leakey-Eisenberg

Dates of review: January 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango
The School Context

P.S. 029 Queens is an elementary school with 770 students from PK through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 56% Hispanic, 13% White, and 29% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013 - 2014 was 93.70%.

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>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</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

Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
Teacher teams consistently meet to engage in inquiry work using protocols to look at student work, data, curriculum and academic tasks and to make appropriate adjustments to improve pedagogy. Teacher leadership pipelines exist vertically within the school to support the work of teacher teams.

Impact
Teachers actively participate in professional learning communities and are studying curriculum, assessments and student work products leading to improvements in pedagogical decision making, coherence of teacher practice, mastery of goals for groups of students and student outcomes. Teacher leaders and teams are making informed curricula and pedagogical decisions about their practice, creating common core aligned tasks, questions and assessments and sharing their work, fostering a collaborative professional learning environment throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams throughout the school have worked with the professional development committee to develop the school’s instructional focus, create action plans and have formed a professional learning capacity framework, resulting in consistent practices across the school community around team norms and professional learning. These tools include professional workshops to build knowledge, expectations of learning committees to develop skills and supervisory feedback to support implementation of practice.

- The school-wide cycle of inquiry tool, includes clear protocols for looking at student work, that include, identifying data and trends, team diagnosis of instructional, curricular or learning gaps, examples of changes made to practice, next steps, goal setting, impacts of teacher decision-making and reflection of learning.

- During the fourth grade teacher team meeting, teachers were studying the impact of their decision to use RAFT (Restate, Answer, Further Explain, Tie Up) consistently to teach students two ways to incorporate appropriate text-based evidence in their writing within the current historical fiction and literary essay writing unit. Teachers evaluated pre-assessment student work, using grade level reading and writing standards, determined gaps and decided to implement this strategy to address student weaknesses. Evaluation of impact of this pedagogical decision resulted in a 25 percent increase across the grades in targeted standards.

- During a kindergarten teacher team meeting, teachers focused on impact of strategies implemented around the school-wide instructional focus, particularly using guided reading strategies to move students more effectively across reading levels, since leveled benchmarks within kindergarten classrooms have changed this year. One teacher modeled her guided reading lesson while colleagues provided feedback and next steps to support her practice.

- The school wide PD action plan supports professional learning through a comprehensive model including workshops, differentiated bridge to practice activities that allow for teachers choice and coinciding inquiry cycles to assess the impact of professional learning on student outcomes. Examples of bridge to practice activities include planning of text dependent questions, anticipating student responses to text depending questions and selecting rigorous text dependent questions and tasks to be used as formative assessments.
Findings
School leaders and teacher teams have developed aligned assessment tools, rubrics and consistent practices to monitor student learning. At present, the school is evaluating its use of rubrics to accurately assess interim and final student progress towards the key standards.

Impact
The introduction and consistent use of assessment tools within and across grades, allows teachers to identify and respond to trends revealed and provide feedback as evidenced in student work products across grades, resulting in additional supports for students. However, this work has not yet transferred to all students’ ability to use these assessment tools to reflect on their overall learning or progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a variety of formative assessment techniques to monitor checks for understanding and student learning, including exit and entrance slips, white boards, as well as, individual and group conferences.

- Teachers are currently working with Teachers College staff developers, United Federation of Teachers Teacher Center and network support to examine and refine current rubrics and tasks to deepen alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts.

- Common assessments such as Teachers College running records, pre and post writing, and math unit assessments are used consistently within and across grades. Teacher teams consistently use these tools to gauge student learning as well as curricular alignment throughout the school.

- Within units of study, although students are provided with rubrics and time is given to unpack them and make connections to exemplars in order to know what quality work looks like, some students interviewed had difficulty making connections between these tools and their own learning. For example, while all students had rubrics and checklists attached to their work during student meeting and there was evidence of opportunity for peer editing and feedback, when questioned about content of rubric and asked to align their work to the expectations, many were not able to demonstrate their learning. In one grade, although the tasks were the same, rubrics used to evaluate student work had different expectations.
**Findings**

The school’s well-structured instructional focus of grounding reading, writing, thinking and discussion in evidence across content areas has unified a school wide belief of how students learn best. Across classrooms, teachers utilize scaffolds and teaching strategies to ensure all students are consistently engaged in challenging, common core aligned tasks.

**Impact**

Coherent strategies across the school such as questioning and discussion techniques, focus on close reading and practices that require students to ground their work in evidence has resulted in improved student outcomes across grades and sub groups.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Key power Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* components, such as 1a, 1e, 3b, 3d, are leveraged within professional learning opportunities, as well as teacher feedback, in order to support ongoing implementation of the school’s instructional focus. In one classroom observed, students were working in trios and through teacher’s planning of scaffolded questions, were able to assess character traits of a main character and explain how other characters within a story, help a reader develop a deeper understanding of a characters actions and decisions.

- To provide equal access to rigorous curriculum and instruction, teachers meet bi-weekly with special education and teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs), to share best practices around the use of multiple entry points that are brought back to the classrooms. For example, in one math classroom visited, students participated in clear systems, such as working with teacher, working in partnerships, working with manipulatives and selecting enrichment problems to provide entry and autonomy for all learners in the class.

- All grade teams are planning tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, using the New York State two point rubrics, administering tasks to students and using this data to inform their instruction in designing small group and individual supports for students. In review of teacher task design and student work, there was evidence of clear alignment to standards, student ability to respond to the task using text evidence, as well as a self-assessment scoring guide, where students had to answer questions related to task expectations such as, “I supported my inference with two pieces of textual evidence”.

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
In response to a deep data dive revealing gaps in the instructional core, the school has engaged in strategic systems to unpack and surface strengths and weaknesses in current curriculum maps and tasks. Teacher teams work effectively to incorporate scaffolds within maps and academic tasks.

Impact
Within and across grades, teachers have a deeper understanding of the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards, and as a result have been able to increase the alignment between curricula, standards and assessments, resulting in school-wide improvements in knowledge of gaps within student learning and development of tasks that cognitively engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work in collaboration with the UFT Teacher Center, Teachers College staff developers, and network support staff, to engage in ongoing refinement of curricula calendars, units of study and tasks, to ensure greater alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, teachers used item skills analysis in math to identify trends and gaps and determined the school’s curriculum was not meeting the needs of all students. Teacher teams engaged in back mapping using learning progression standards and incorporated multiple sources such as Engage New York modules to prioritize and go deeper into certain standards.

- Through the use of a school-wide math continuum, teachers are able to adjust levels of the same skill for multiple entry points in order to highlight needs for all learners, at the level they are ready for. This work has also increased teacher content knowledge throughout the school.

- Staff developers are working with teachers in grade bands to ensure coherence within and across grades. As a result of this work, the school implemented Fundations to enhance emphasis of phonemic awareness in the early grades and teachers are currently focusing on incorporating text dependent questions into tasks.

- Interventions are built into both programming and curricular work. For example, Imagine Learning, Queens Theatre for English Language Learners (QTELL) program includes writing and performing original work for an audience. Title III supports the arts units, such as scrapbooking through storytelling and cooking using math, as well as Leveled Literacy Instruction (LLI), are examples of programs incorporated into the curriculum, to build language acquisition skills and support the needs of struggling students and ELLs. Also added were CCLS aligned Guided Reading libraries in fiction and non-fiction to support ELLs and struggling students.

- Curricula maps within and across grades include essential questions, unit goals, skills and strategies to teach, bends, and assessments. Additionally, they include an introduction to units using former unit or skills addressed during prior grades, standards, read alouds to support units, guided reading, word work and plans for differentiated entry for ELLs and students in need of interventions, as well as materials that will support teaching and learning throughout the units.
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Leadership has a clear curricula and instructional improvement vision that is consistently communicated through high expectations, strategic feedback systems and professional learning opportunities. Students and their families are well informed of the school-wide culture of high expectations and pathways to college and career readiness.

Impact
Cohesive feedback systems offer staff a clear portrait of the school's expectations within instructional core for teachers leading to consistency in practice within and across grades. Clear learning objectives and aligned supports allow students and families to be aware of learning progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and her cabinet engage in bi-weekly supervisory inquiry in order to set, evaluate and norm high expectations. During one cycle, the team studied the impact of their professional development on teacher ability to design tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Findings revealed the need to tier teachers in this practice and provide leveled support to ensure coherence and alignment across the school.

- There are school-wide expectations of face to face feedback between administration and teachers for every observation. Teachers are able to articulate how this feedback is driving and improving their practice.

- Parents communicate that the school offers them multiple opportunities to participate in their child's learning. For example, the school consistently utilizes home and back folders, planners as tracking and communication tools, Meet the Staff Curriculum Night, and summer challenge in reading, writing and math. Workshops led by teachers and the parent coordinator on topics such as the importance of vocabulary in academic areas and how to help your child expand their sentences, help parents work along-side the school to improve student outcomes.

- Classroom environments throughout the school provide students with clear supports and communicate expectations of student work products as well as footprints of their current learning. Throughout all classrooms visited students used these access points to drive their instructional decision-making.

- Currently, the school is working to better implement feedback systems that will allow for student understanding of their progress along the continuum of a standard, as well as building autonomy and ownership of their learning.