Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Anthony Pranzo School

24Q113

78-23 87th Street
Queens
NY 11386

Principal: Alejandro Megias

Date of review: February 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Madeline Chan
**The School Context**

PS/IS 113 is an elementary and middle with 1,534 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 37% Hispanic, 55% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 12% 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 95.8%.

**School Quality Criteria**

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

**Quality Indicator:** 1.2 Pedagogy  
**Rating:** Well Developed

Findings
Classroom practices and teacher pedagogy provides consistent and purposeful instructional supports, including reflective practices, and the use of strategic entry points and extensions which foster deep reasoning in student work products across the school.

Impact
Across classrooms, curricula extensions support students to produce meaningful work products so that students take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence
- Plans for lessons and units are well structured with appropriate pacing and time allocations. Instructional student groups are organized based on data collected from assessments and teachers’ observations. Student groups build on students' strengths and incorporate student choice to maximize learning. For example, the school designed a program for English language learners take into account the needs of each of its 32 students. Visual, pictorial and vocabulary supports are part of every lesson so that students receive repetitive exposure to standards based work. As a result, students are performing better on baseline assessments and daily assignments.

- Lesson and unit structures are clear and allow for various pathways like inquiry, project based and collaborative learning to better understanding student needs. Teachers can explain how specific strategies and instructional tasks address the needs of individual and sub-groups of students by articulating how the task is designed, modified and measured for impact. For example, in one lower grade class students were struggling with letter recognition skills. Teachers incorporated a method of “teach and check” so that immediate monitoring for success was accomplished. After a period of two weeks results indicated that students had mastered the task of remembering, naming and using letters.

- Across classrooms, teachers strategically use scaffolds like thinking maps, technology, academic vocabulary prompts, and choice to create a myriad of ways for students to access the content and be supported in their learning so that all students show progress. In an upper grade class students were working on developing fluency with addition and subtraction of fractions. Some Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports were math boards, fractions strips, counting tape, colored pencils, high lighters and a math video. Students agreed that these tools helped them solve problems and reinforce learning.

- Student to student dialogue, use of academic vocabulary and evidence based accountable talk is a part of each lesson across content areas. Students, across the school, produce work and engage in discussions that reflect critical thinking and problem solving as well as student ownership of the process. In an upper grade classroom, students were working in stations and using a four point rubric to assess their success in problem solving and communicating their answers. In another class, the speech teacher worked with students on their goals for speech in alignment with the class lesson. Students were receiving question prompts to improve accountable conversations.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
The school uses common assessments in literacy, writing and math. Across classrooms teacher’s assessment practices consistently tracks student progress with frequent checks for understanding.

Impact
The school’s systems to monitor progress through data analysis as well as during instruction are used to guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet students learning needs.

Supporting Evidence
- The school uses New York State test results, item skills analysis, Code X literacy program in upper grades, and summative and formative assessments throughout the year in order to track student performance and progress. Teachers deconstructed the results of the state exams so that specific questions were isolated in order to make curricular adjustments. Additionally, in lower grades, assessment review led to adjustments in higher order thinking skills and more specific details for students to create, draw and label their work. Although assessments are used to determine student improvement towards goals it is difficult, at this time, to connect student progress and instructional decisions to demonstrate increased mastery for all students.

- Teachers monitor student progress in literacy and writing. In sixth grade, the literacy program was adjusted so that essential questions require deeper thinking to increase student engagement. Modifications included-comparing two articles and finding specific text based evidence to support a claim. Teachers also incorporated Depth of Knowledge (DOK) activities like analyzing song lyrics to better answer questions. Students were able to self-assess their practices following the activity. Teachers stated that this work helps track student progress and adjust student grouping. As a result, students believe they have greater ownership over their work because they are able to conduct consistent checks and have their peers and teachers weigh in on their progress.

- Across classrooms teachers used various methods like peer feedback checklists, student self-assessment checklists and rubrics specific to the tasks. Teachers modify and adjust lessons based on students learning needs. Some adjustments observed involved offering more modeling time to specific topics, using visual aids, leveling texts and utilizing graphic organizers that included t-charts and bubble maps so that students can organize their work. Students stated that they liked having a choice in learning tools because “it made them feel like a bigger part of the lesson”.

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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
Curricula is aligned to the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Higher order skills are consistently emphasized across grades.

Impact
The school’s curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for learners. Across grades, academic tasks encourage students to reach their potential through analysis of resources and application of what is being taught.

Supporting Evidence
- Units of study in literacy and writing integrate the Common Core instructional shifts across the grades. Planned strategies like guided and individual practice, academic vocabulary, persuasive writing and claims supported by text based evidence have assisted students in improving their reading levels. For example, in an 8th grade class, students were learning about category text features and how to develop a better understanding of how characters are created. In the same class, students were asked to select and research a college and determine the college’s qualities and how it aligns to their own learning needs. They also had to write an admissions essay and persuade the reader that the college had resources that were aligned to their academic and social/emotional needs. Eighth graders stated that the exercise “opened their eyes” to what different colleges have to offer and how their futures may be based on the work they are currently achieving.

- Lesson plans and curricula maps provide evidence that the school develops rigorous academic tasks through the use of instructional resources from Ready Gen, Code X, Go Math, CMP3 and the Common Core library. As a result, purposeful decisions have included designing open-ended math tasks, opinion based discussions and writing, and close reading of authentic text. As a result, students have opportunities to strengthen their logic and reasoning skills and allow for transference and application of knowledge to real world situations.

- Lesson plans emphasize holding students accountable for thinking “out of the box”. In one fourth grade class, students completed a yoga routine before determining how to use multiples to find equivalent fractions. Students were engaged in rigorous activities involving turn and talk, validation of answers, visual cues, question and response frames and “phone a friend” for an answer. The teacher posited that based on these strategies, 50% of the class improved in math tasks in unit five. In the same room, a bulletin board reflected students reading and discussing European explorers seeking the Northwest Passage. Their goals were to determine the main idea of a text, identify key ideas of the text and provide a summary of what they learned.
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
High expectations are consistently messaged to staff through the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DFT) in trainings and other forms of communication. Workshops and performance updates keep families aware of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact
There is a strong buy-in and mutual accountability amongst staff, students and their families based on the structures that support the school’s high expectations. This has led to a clear path towards increased student achievement and future aspirations.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders create elevated levels of expectations for all staff, which is evidenced throughout the community through verbal and written feedback, teacher meetings, ongoing workshops and website information. Teachers are able to cite examples of how administrators’ feedback has assisted them in strengthening their lessons by pairing them up with colleagues who have already accomplished the assigned task successfully. One example was given regarding connecting students’ writing needs to strategies by analyzing an author’s craft or viewpoint to critique a text. This level of sharing has created a culture where accountability is reciprocal between all stakeholders. Teachers agree that they have a voice in instructional decisions like choosing resources and curriculum that best fits the needs of their students.

- The school organizes ongoing events and creates multiple opportunities to partner with and engage families in learning about new incentives to help students. The school also consistently fostering families’ participation in a culture of high expectations connected to students’ future ambitions related to college and career studies. Parents are pleased with the feedback the school is offering about their children’s progress towards meeting expectations for higher levels of learning. One parent stated the, “communication is on-going and strong. The parent coordinator is on speed dial and the school is extremely sensitive to the needs of my three children”. Another parent stated that parents and students are “valued at the school and everyone is made to feel special for their individual talents and skills”.

- The school provides ongoing, clear lines of verbal and written communication such as progress reports, parent teacher conferences, parent informational sessions and workshops and student led conferences with families to deepen their understanding of college and career readiness expectations. Parents believe that this high level of communication empowers them to help support their children in meeting and exceeding those expectations. Parents are very articulate about the tenets of the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan, the school’s instructional vision and the data that support the rationale behind the vision.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Teacher teams consistently conduct inquiry-based meetings to analyze assessment data and student work related to student achievement, discuss instructional strategies to improve Common Core aligned student outcomes and examine results to determine learning targets and next steps.

Impact
Teachers’ instructional capacities are enhanced by professional collaborations and contribute to effective classroom practices leading to student improvement in literacy and mathematics.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher teams are involved in inquiry-based conversations related to school goals and carefully connected to instructional shifts. Teachers generate questions aligned to the text to reinforce students’ thinking and help them identify supportive evidence, critical responses and promote deep and critical analysis of their work. Teams are currently involved in reviewing assessments like I-Ready, math benchmarks and student writing using the 6+1 rubric. Teachers explained that based on their findings, if students are struggling they will be grouped using a re-teach method, have students stop and reassess themselves or create word choice folders. The latter method has yielded positive results. A performance based assessment revealed that out of 27 fifth graders, 19 improved in word choice decisions.

- School leaders and teachers have built a culture of professional collaboration through inter-visitations and voluntary learning sessions in which insights related to coherence of pedagogy are shared. These practices have informed instruction and have led to the improvement of goals for individual students. Teachers developed learning stations to meet the needs of all students, a “popcorn method” to discuss and answer questions and reflective tiered questions to lead up to synthesis and application of concepts taught. Teachers are also proud of the development of student choice through a “menu of options”. Students choose an appetizer, entrée or dessert, with the outcome of high level work and responses. Although this learning strategy is in the initial stages. Teachers have seen increased enthusiasm and more definitive ways to group students based on their current needs.

- Teacher teams provide rationales for instructional decisions based on data findings and analysis of student work that leads to adjustments in teacher practice and creates goals for groups of students. Teachers found that student engagement at the beginning of a unit was weak. One example of adjusted teacher practice, school-wide, was the addition of visual cues at the beginning of a unit to give students a stronger grasp of new concepts and clear entry points to academic vocabulary. Results indicated that students were more engaged and that high level thinking questions were being answered correctly when students use the strategy.