Quality Review Report

2014-2015

F.F Christopher A. Santora School

P.S. 222Q

86-15 37th Avenue
Jackson Heights
NY 11372

Principal: Yvonne Marrero

Date of review: December 4, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico
## The School Context

The F.F. Christopher A. Santora School is an early childhood school with 686 students from grade Pre-Kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 1% Black, 76% Hispanic, 8% White, and 13% Asian, 2% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91%.

## 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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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>Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<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>Proficient</td>
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</table>

### School Culture

<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>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

<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>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>
</tr>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings
Teacher teams engage in focused inquiry based conversations that have a clear instructional focus supported by professional protocols. Teachers engage in work that promotes the school’s instructional goals and builds alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact
Professional collaborations have resulted in shared improvements in teacher practice and increased student learning.

Supporting Evidence
- All teachers collaborate on professional learning teams. The school’s instructional focus is used to strategically implement structured professional collaborations and job-embedded professional development. These include professional learning opportunities on Universal Design for Learning, multiple intelligences, tiered instruction, depth of knowledge, and pedagogical strategies. Teachers are developing teacher practice in the areas of using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction. All of these efforts have led to changes in curriculum units. Lessons are more closely aligned to the instructional shifts with the addition of more projects and tasks that cognitively engage students.

- Students running record results demonstrate an increase in student’s scoring at/above grade level. The volume and quality of writing have also significantly improved. Teachers use student data from pre on-demand assessments to gauge what students know and what they need to teach to improve writing skills. Teachers develop checklists and use rubrics to encourage students to elaborate and add internal thinking.

- Teachers at the teacher team meeting expressed that they have cultivated a collaborative culture where they feel safe and supported and share best practices. They also assist in the planning of professional development to strengthen teacher pedagogy. One teacher said “teachers are rising out of their isolated roles”.

- Grade level teacher teams meet on a weekly basis to plan standards-aligned tiered activities for selected lessons in reading and mathematics in order to provide multiple entry points based on student cognitive and language readiness levels. Teacher teams create ongoing checks for understanding in cycles where a “bridge to practice” protocol is implemented to reflect the Danielson Framework. As a result of teacher teamwork, 70% of students in grades 1 and 2 who scored in levels one and two on running records last year have shown improvement with many students increasing by 4 or more reading levels. The volume and quality of student writing have also improved as evidenced by pre and post writing samples.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
The majority of classes are clearly guided by the Danielson Framework, which provides a coherent set of beliefs around quality instruction that is reinforced through teacher team discussions.

Impact
Most classes strategically incorporate numerous practices for multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions into the curricula so that all students including English Language Learners and special education students are engaged in meaningful tasks. Some classes were marked by high-level questioning and student to student discussion.

Supporting Evidence
- The first grade reading lesson teaching point read “I can compare and contrast characters in a story”. Vocabulary form the story “The Recess Queen” was presented and reviewed with the students to ensure understanding. The teacher asked several thinking questions including “How does Katie Sue react to mean Jean’s behavior? Was it a good idea to ignore her? Students were asked to turn and talk to share their answers. There was a brief discussion on whether the students thought Mean Jean was a good classroom citizen. Children were asked to support their claims with evidence from the story. Some of the other questions posed did not extend student thinking. Students used different graphic organizers and were assigned various tasks to complete their writing assignment on comparing and contrasting the characters Mean Jean and Katie Sue. A more challenging assignment and extensions for higher level students was not included in the lesson.

- The second grade English Language Learners class had students working in five groups. Each group was based on needs and named after the New York City boroughs. All students were working on sequencing the events in the story “Alexander who used to be Rich Last Sunday”. All students had a story sequence checklist to refer to and they used it to support their learning. The lower performing group was cutting out pictures and sequencing the events. A higher performing group was asked to write about each event using first, next, later and other sequence words. The teachers in the room supported each group with pictures, activating prior knowledge, and reviewing academic vocabulary in the story. Students were asked to refer to the story and reread sections using close reading strategies.

- In all classrooms, small group instruction supports the learning of students with disabilities and English language learners. Students’ readiness levels are and learning preferences are considered when developing differentiated learning activities, materials and assessments. Pedagogical practices provide multiple entry points for students and include the use of pictures, diagrams, technology manipulatives and graphic organizers. English Language methodologies such as total physical response are utilized by teachers. Students are asked to justify their answers using text-based evidence, however, they are not always engaged in deeper level discussions that promote higher levels of student thinking and ownership.
Additional Findings

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
The school community aligns curriculum to Common Core Learning Standards by implementing and refining instructional programs and resources across grades and subject areas. Student data and work samples are used to adapt curriculum for individual and groups of student to ensure there are appropriate levels of challenge and engagement.

Impact
The instructional shifts and Universal Design for Learning are embedded in the curriculum. As a result, students have consistent opportunities to demonstrate critical thinking skills with multiple entry points and supports.

Supporting Evidence
- The school implements a curriculum that integrates common core aligned instructional programs and resources such as Ready-Gen, Go Math, Zaner-Bloser writing, Fundations and Creative Curriculum. Teacher teams meet regularly to develop units, and tasks that focus on the instructional shifts in literacy and mathematics. They critically analyze curricula based on student data results and make necessary adjustments. Teachers engage in backward planning to identify goals and enduring understandings within each unit and create curriculum maps to ensure alignment across grades.

- Grade level teacher teams differentiate academic tasks and tiered activities by using data and a variety of strategies to ensure multiple entry points and accessibility to the curriculum. English as a Second Language (ESL) methodologies are incorporated into the curriculum and include academic vocabulary and language development both in verbal and written form. English Language Learners participate in an instructional program that ensures continuity of rigorous instruction with high expectations.

- Curriculum units and lessons include content standards, teaching points, critical thinking discussion questions, vocabulary, tasks and tiered activities for leveled groups. Thinking projects are designed as part of the culminating activity in each unit. In one literacy unit, students are asked to describe what the common theme is across different texts. Students are required to use voice in writing and think about purpose when addressing an audience. The mathematics units require students to apply mathematical concepts to new problems or real world situations and explain their process when solving equations.

- The schools’ art program offers music, theatre and visual arts for all students. The curriculum follows the Blueprint for teaching and Learning in the Arts, and follows a standards-based rigorous approach to teaching the arts. Instructional programs such as Silver Burdett’s “Making Music” and Houghton Mifflin’s Readers’ Theatre Program.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  Rating: Proficient

Findings
The school uses common assessments aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, with built-in structures such as teacher teams that use protocols to examine data and make meaningful curricular decisions.

Impact
The school integrates common assessments and rubrics across the disciplines and the subsequent data is used to make instructional modifications so that students, including English Language Learners and special education students, demonstrate progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence
- The school implements varied types of curriculum aligned assessments in all subject areas. These include benchmark and periodic assessments from Ready Gen and Go Math programs, as well as, teacher created assessments tools such as rubrics and checklists. The comprehensive assessment practices include the use of diagnostic, formative and summative tests and portfolios. Summative assessments are implemented at the completion of every unit of study within literacy, mathematics, social studies and science to provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of skills and concepts taught within the unit of study. The school has an assessment schedule which all teachers follow that ensures coherence, timely grades and useful feedback.

- In literacy, a school based end of the unit reading assessment is also administered to assess for application of skills and concepts taught within a reading unit. Students are provided with unfamiliar grade-level complex texts and respond to questions of varying complexity, which align to the enduring understanding of the unit. In writing, students are asked to produce an “On Demand” writing sample related to the upcoming unit of study. The results are used to assess the skills and writing traits students need to develop and are used to inform instructional planning and grouping.

- Teachers use a checklist as a way to check students understanding during group work. They indicate if students need additional support or have correctly completed a task independently. Some classes did use questioning and effective assessment practices to check for student understanding. However, some classes were typified by spur of the moment assessments that didn’t allow the teacher to effectively make adjustments to meet all students learning needs. Higher level students were not given extension activities or more challenging work during several class visits.
Findings
Expectations for delivering the standards-based curriculum, the Danielson Framework and student progress monitoring are clear and supported by a culture of mutual accountability.

Impact
A culture of high expectations is promoted for all students through the collaborative development of student goals and assessment practices. Teachers are expected to participate in professional development, collaborate in grade level meetings and make strategic decisions about curriculum and instruction. Effective feedback and guidance is provided to support student development and ensure that students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers support students’ progress by developing unit goals across all subject areas. These goals are shared with the school community during morning announcements, newsletters and online. This practice strengthens student accountability and ownership of their learning. The current goals are posted in all classrooms in every subject. Teachers provide students and parents with an overview of each unit so that students are introduced to what they will be learning and what the expectations are for the culminating tasks.

- Assessment practices and tools help establish clear criteria, expectations and feedback to support student progress. Checklists, exemplars, and rubrics are used to guide and support students as they complete their tasks. In addition, opportunities for peer editing allow for students to provide each other with feedback and reflect on the quality of their work and others.

- There are structures in place for teachers to meet regularly in grade level and vertical meetings to look at student work, create curriculum maps and refine lessons. Teachers and administrators identify the gaps and overlapping content to ensure each unit of study meets the expectations of the grade level standards. There is also a calendar of professional development activities which are provided to improve and support teacher pedagogy.

- The school has established structures to ensure solid partnerships with families to support student progress. Early in the year parents are invited to attend a Meet the Teacher/Curriculum night. During this event, teachers presented how the CCLS aligned curriculum supports students in becoming prepared for college and career. A series of parent workshops are held every other month alternating between content areas of literacy and mathematics to raise awareness of the concepts and skills students are learning in school. They also equip parents with strategies they can use at home to help their children. On Tuesdays there is a dedicated time slot for teachers to conduct one-on-one meetings with individual parents to discuss their child’s progress. The principal also sends home a monthly newsletter to inform parents of school events, activities and policy updates.