Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Shirlee Solomon
31R008
112 Lindenwood Road
Staten Island
NY 10308

Principal: Lisa Esposito

Date of review: November 19, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
The School Context

Shirlee Solomon is an elementary school with 556 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 3% Black, 12% Hispanic, 79% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94%.

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>Developing</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>Developing</td>
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<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>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>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>
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Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
Structures and systems are in place to communicate high expectations to the school community and establish partnerships with families on student learning.

Impact
Comprehensive understanding of expectations among students, families and staff members emulates a clear path towards student success and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The faculty handbook, emails and memorandums provide staff with clear expectations on curricula, instruction, and assessment policies. During a teacher interview, one teacher stated, “The vision of school expectations are clearly within our instructional focus which helps our professional learning community enhance our understanding and allows our teacher leaders to work with us comprehensively.”

- The professional development plan reflects multiple trainings on the Danielson Framework for Teaching based on an analysis of Advance data to provide staff with a clear set of instructional expectations. Additionally there is a specialized plan for paraprofessionals which frames professional learning for these staff members. For example, as indicated in the school wide professional development plan, development of the school’s instructional focus “engaged the faculty in self-reflection in an effort to seriously consider what instructional content would best meet the needs of students.”

- The Friday Morning Instructional group plan, developed by the instructional cabinet comprised of teachers and administration, presents a multitude of activities geared to prepare staff members, including new teachers, on questioning strategies, planning effective lessons and Depth of Knowledge content. The plan indicates areas for accountability by key staff members as well as a ‘follow up’ column listing next steps to include teachers and administration.

- The school provides ongoing feedback throughout the year by sending letters home indicating student scores on school assessments and including strengths and areas of focus. Benchmark reports are provided minimally three times a year with ongoing feedback by the teacher using the parent engagement hour, School Messenger and letters to families from teachers. During an interview, one parent indicated that their child knew the curriculum well and could articulate his goals. For example, one parent stated, “my child told me ‘I have to go back to the text and use evidence to support what I am saying – one or two text evidence’.”

- Parent coordinator and teachers provide workshops focused on Common Core Learning Standards. Parents indicated that they were able to understand how their child’s learning was connected to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, one parent stated, “my child stated that he has to solve problems with a pattern, give the answer and explain why he chose the answer”, reflective of the learning from the workshops.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
Formative and summative assessment practices are in place, yet the assessments reflect variations across classrooms.

Impact
Explicit adjustment of instructional practices and clear next steps towards student achievement is inconsistent across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses rubrics and assessments which reflect alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, student writing pieces contain rubrics attached with a rating that reflect assessment in the following areas: statement of purpose/focus, organization, elaboration of evidence, language and vocabulary and conventions.

- Across classrooms, student bulletin boards contained feedback stating compliments and next steps. Teachers highlighted the areas to compliment and to provide next steps for students. However, the feedback practice was not prevalent after a review of several work folders and portfolios, across grades and subjects areas. Folders and portfolios stated goals but contained limited steps for support or feedback to students throughout the unit of study.

- During an interview, only two students were able to articulate clear next steps from their portfolios and work folders. One student stated he needed to work on grouping his examples into “10’s”. The other student stated she needed to use better vocabulary and form more descriptive sentences. Other students responses included, “need to write better responses in math” and “study math facts”. Overall, teacher feedback to students did not provide for a clear understanding of what student next steps were for improving work products.

- Across classrooms, some teachers used questioning strategies to check for students understanding. However, in only two classes, teachers used this knowledge to adjust instructional practices. For example, in one class, the teacher used questions to gather information about a student’s response to a story and asked him to draw more details such as grass, flowers and snow melting to make the picture descriptive.

- During the leadership meeting, the principal stated that the use of conference notes was a prevalent school wide practice where teachers capture information via 1:1 student-teacher interactions and are used to inform and adjust instruction. However, these practices were not consistently present throughout the school.
### Additional Findings

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**
Teacher teams promote the school goals through ongoing collaborations using school data. Analysis of school data and work products occurs regularly and focuses on the improvement of student outcomes.

**Impact**
Ongoing improvement of curricula is reflected in unit plans and tasks. School-wide team structures and decisions demonstrate an increase in teacher and student understanding of instructional shifts.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures that capture the focus of their meeting. These structures include agendas, *Looking at Student Work* protocols, minutes, and supplemental materials. The focus of these meetings encompasses an integration of the school goals around reading comprehension and written expression.

- While observing a teacher team, members reviewed the fall performance task results and focused on the extended constructive response. Targeted students were discussed and strategies including the use of ‘guided model’ think alouds were shared practices the participants agreed to implement before the next meeting.

- During an interview with teachers, one participant discussed how the sharing of best practices from inquiry influenced targeted students and show increased progression. The teacher stated that many of his targeted students tended to copy from the text which was a problem he brought to the inquiry team. Suggestions to teach direct lesson on paraphrasing were suggested and implemented as a result. The teacher stated the student was able to use paraphrasing after several lessons which improved the quality of his writing. As a result, the student was moved to another group with a new goal.

- One teacher stated that using close reading is forcing students to slow down their reading, which is the focus of her grade’s inquiry team. The teacher stated that one strategy she learned via her inquiry group was to use left margin note taking with students. One target student was able to use this strategy to communicate what a portion of the text stated after being taught several lessons on left margin note taking.
Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
School leaders and teachers align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), integrate the instructional shifts and consistently utilize multiple resources to emphasize rigor in their learning tasks.

Impact
The school’s standards-based, coherent curricula offers a range of learning experiences that support student learning, foster critical thinking and promote college and career readiness

Supporting Evidence

- Lessons and academic tasks include the integration of the instructional shifts across subject areas. For example, a 1st grade English language arts task asked students to conduct a close reading activity to recognize the story elements using pictures and words and provide text based details when discussing what they learned about the main character.

- The school uses CCLS aligned programs with integrated instructional shifts. These programs include The Ready Gen reading program in grades kindergarten to 5 and Go Math in grades kindergarten to 5. Pacing calendars provide vertical and horizontal alignment in skill development across subject areas.

- A review of pacing calendars, unit plans, lesson plans and tasks integrate Depth of Knowledge questions including: How do writers create interesting stories?, How can we understand the central message of a story is often how characters relate to each other?, and how does understanding place value help us identify and count patterns more effectively? Similar questions were viewed in curricula across content areas and grades. Unit plans consist of tiered vocabulary to support English language learners and Students with Disabilities. For example, in one lesson plan, the teacher included separate sets of words for groups of students in an Instructional Co-Teaching classroom using three different leveled texts. Additionally, the core curricula, Go Math and Ready Gen, used by the school, contain modified support in the program guides.
Findings
Across some classrooms, students are provided teaching strategies which scaffold their access to challenging tasks and increase their abilities to engage in student to student discussions using higher ordering thinking skills.

Impact
School wide practices demonstrate emergence in the ability to ensure all subgroups, including Students with Disabilities, are showing progression towards meeting the standards in academic tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, the level of questioning varied. For example, after a read aloud in one classroom, teachers asked questions such as, “What do fish have? What lives in a pond?” However, in another classroom, teachers asked higher level questions such as “What strategy did you use to solve the problem?” and elicited from students details on how that strategy helped them solve the problem. This type of high level questioning was not prevalent across classrooms.

- In some classrooms, students were grouped for the purpose of engaging in a jigsaw activity. Scaffolds were present in some classrooms. For example, the use of graphic organizers such as Venn Diagrams and story structure maps were used in some classes as well as the ability to draw and write responses to stories in the ASD class. In one classroom, when asked to explain the purpose of the activity, a student stated they were learning about stink bugs and the activity would help them learn more. However in the other classroom, students were unable to explain the purpose of the activity. One student stated that he had to write a “readers” response but couldn’t articulate the rationale behind the activity.

- Across classrooms, the majority of the lessons were teacher directed. For example, a discussion observed after a read aloud allowed for more questions and response between teachers to student than student to student. Additionally the questions asked were low level such as “What is lox? What does this say about him?” Students were not given an opportunity to engage in a full class discussion after reading. Across other classes, students primarily worked independently with little to no discussion between peers.