Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P.S. 095 Sheila Mencher
Elementary – Middle School X095
3961 Hillman Avenue
Bronx
NY 10463

Principal: Serge Davis
Date of review: January 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone
The School Context

P.S. 095 Sheila Mencher is an elementary and middle school with 1329 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 19% Black, 68% Hispanic, 4% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 18% 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 91.0%.

School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</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>Celebration</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>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
Within the constructs of the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, curricula strategically integrate higher order skills in a coherent way across grades and subject areas.

Impact
All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are exposed to higher level tasks that are embedded across grades and subjects allowing students to demonstrate their thinking, thus leading to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence
- To create coherence across grades, the school has established a practice of integrating the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts through the work of vertical curriculum planning teams that develop and refine units of study. For example, curricula from the lower grades strategically build on non-fiction and informational texts towards the required research reports in the upper grades.

- Higher order skills are embedded throughout curricula through the specific use of and reference to Webb’s Depth of Knowledge indicators and the Hess Cognitive Matrix. In addition, English language arts and math curricula include rationales and teacher learning sections to emphasize purpose, context and professional learning to ensure and maintain academic rigor. For example, an 8th grade unit on social issues through novels and non-fiction articles states, “Students will present their arguments in myriad ways—in the form of ad campaigns, oral debates, and published opinion pieces. A special emphasis will be placed on the composition architecture, as students refine their ability to connect ideas across key points and paragraphs as a means to support their own thinking with information culled from other experts, both directly and implicitly.” The teacher learning section of a 7th grade math unit states, “Careful review of the holistic scoring rubric and acceptable mathematical policies is needed so that students can be well informed about how their answers will be scored and what is acceptable and not acceptable mathematically.”

- Across grades and subject areas, a review of lesson plans shows differentiation and scaffolds for specific groups of students based on student work and data. For example, a 3rd grade math lesson contained differentiation of instruction based on individual education plan goals, classwork, quizzes and tests. Groups included teacher-guided groups for students who did not master previous topic skills and also paired students with one partner stronger in math and the other with emerging skills in order for them to review skills.
Area of Focus

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

Findings
Across the school, teaching strategies allow all students to be engaged in challenging tasks, yet active participation by all students varies across classrooms.

Impact
Curricular extensions across classrooms support students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to participate actively and take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence
- Across classrooms visited, entry points into the curriculum were provided for various groups of students. For example, in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade literacy class, groups of students were reading different books according to need. However, in other classes there were missed opportunities for students to gain greater access to tasks through such strategies as teacher modeling and paired or small group discussions.

- Students engage in tasks that require high levels of student thinking. For example, in a 6<sup>th</sup> grade class, students were asked to examine quotes from a story to generate meaning for the plot. In a 4<sup>th</sup> grade bilingual class, students were guided in English with Spanish supports as needed to examine how and why characters changed in the text they were reading.

- Students were engaged in high-level discussions across classrooms. For example, in an 8<sup>th</sup> grade math class, students discussed the processes they used to engage in their tasks. However, opportunities to have peers guide or critique their fellow students so as to increase engagement, participation, and ownership of their learning were not observed.
Additional Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional development opportunities. Training and performance updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact
The school has a culture of mutual accountability and staff takes ownership on improving their own practice and crafting partnerships with parents that result in increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence
- Across the school the instructional foci regarding differentiated instruction and questioning and discussion techniques are posted and the entire school community is focused on these goals in order to increase pedagogical capacity and refine opportunities for all children to succeed. For example, during a teacher meeting, teachers spoke about various venues to increase their capacity to address the foci and engage in shared responsibility for success. These include inter-visitations and teacher-led professional learning sessions. One teacher said, “Our conversations revealed we need to be more rigorous. Our goals were developed from visiting each other’s classes and from the vertical planning teams so we can lay foundations to build on what previous grades have done and continue to build our community.”

- During a teacher meeting, teachers spoke about how they build on best practices from each other in order to learn and grow. One teacher said, “I learned some questioning techniques from my colleagues and I learned what I should not be doing. We share best practices and we keep each other in check as we get ideas from each other.”

- During a parent meeting, parents indicated that they are informed of school goals and their children’s progress towards those goals via a number of venues including workshops, monthly parent newsletters by grade, student progress reports and access to i-Ready for the lower grades. They also spoke about monthly Parent Talk sessions which provide a platform for parents to network and address educational and social issues. One parent spoke about how their ideas are solicited and responded to. For example, one change that came about was a change in uniform policy where students now have increased choices. Parents also spoke about how the Parents Association collects data from the School Leadership Team regarding state exams, other testing, after-school programs, and Saturday programs to review vis-à-vis school goals, thus partnering with the school to address ways to help students achieve success.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  Rating: Proficient

Findings
Across the school, teachers use common assessments aligned to curricula to track student progress and make curricular adjustments.

Impact
The school’s use of common assessments, data analysis and feedback allows teachers to determine student progress toward goals and adjust instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence
- There are various venues to provide actionable feedback to students including extensive teacher comments that are rubric aligned and offer concrete next steps, one-on-one conferencing, and opportunities for student self-reflection that provide additional insights to teachers for grouping. Student work displays in classrooms show student reflections on their work aligned to rubrics and include, “Things I did well,” and “Things that I need to improve.” There was lengthy and specific feedback by teachers. During a student meeting, a 3rd grade student said, “The teacher gives us a rubric and sits with us with our work. One of my goals is to do better with sequence of events and to be clear on information.”

- Across the school, uniform assessments, including pre-assessments and post-assessments, the majority of which are teacher-created, are used to track students’ progress. Teachers collect data depicting end-of-unit assessment grades, and then compare these grades across classes on a given grade. Based on this information, teachers create action plans that denote trends, next steps and actions to be taken. For example, a 4th grade literacy analysis shows that 84% of the grade is performing at Level 1 and that class averages are evenly matched. Next steps included integrating text types into students’ every day reading and make explicit the application of reading strategies during content area instruction.

- The school uses data from common assessments to adjust instruction and define student goals with student input. During a teacher meeting one teacher described this process. “We looked at strengths and areas for improvement and saw that that appropriate verb tenses was an area to work on. We put that language directly into our rubric. Students reflected and formed goals. Goals are posted. When students get back their tests they see the charts of how the class is doing.”

- The school has established the practice of maintaining a growth portfolio for each student. This portfolio travels with the student from grade to grade, thus providing a view of student progress over time.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Teacher teams are engaged in collaborative work that promotes the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards by analyzing assessment data and student work to improve teacher practice and student achievement.

Impact
Inquiry-based teacher team collaborations address the school’s instructional goals through assessment of student work and data, and refinement of pedagogy, resulting in adult and student learning.

Supporting Evidence
- The school has established a practice of engaging in a pedagogical needs assessment in order to determine goals and to inform the work of coaches who are teacher team facilitators. These goals are aligned to the school-wide instructional foci and serve to advance the work of the Common Core-aligned curricula and address the indicators of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. During a teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about engaging in professional learning from colleagues. For example, in addressing how to use questioning effectively, they watched a video of a peer’s class to share best practices.

- The teacher teams are structured to engage in an inquiry approach by employing protocols such as the “Rounds” protocol during which teachers provide warm and cool comments on pieces of student work to determine strengths and address needs. For example, the 6th grade team looked at a social studies assessment in the form of a document-based question (DBQ) using this protocol. They gave warm and cool feedback, engaged in an error analysis and discussed instructional implications. The teachers discovered that the student whose work they were examining had not evaluated the evidence so that the documents she chose did not correspond to her claim. They discussed the challenges the students might have had in choosing the documents, which included researching appropriately, understanding text and vocabulary, and grappling with the complexity of the texts. Instructional adjustments included working with students to analyze the requirements of the tasks to focus on comprehension. Teachers planned to compare the next round of DBQ essays to this round to see what progress has been made and reassess instructional practices and scaffolds for groups of students.

- Teachers explained that during meeting times they discuss their successes and challenges to see what patterns emerge in order to form student groups. Analysis and discussion of next steps has led to significant changes. For example, when benchmark data on writing revealed challenges with main idea and supplying appropriate details, classroom centers were created to address these skills. In addition, time was restructured so that there is now a double block of time for reading and writing instruction and a single block where students can go to the appropriate center for additional opportunities to achieve their learning targets.