Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Walt Disney
Elementary School X160
4140 Hutchinson River Parkway East
Bronx
NY 10475

Principal: Lori Baker

Date of review: April 30, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon
The School Context

Walt Disney is an elementary school with 400 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 58% Black, 36% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1% Native American, 1% multi-racial and 1% White students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

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>Focus</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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</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>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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<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>Proficient</td>
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## Area of Celebration

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**
The majority of teachers participate in inquiry-driven teacher team meetings that promote achievement of school wide goals and enhance teacher capacity. Distributed leadership structures promote teacher leadership and allow teachers a voice in school wide decision-making.

**Impact**
Teacher team meetings and distributed leadership structures promote the achievement of school wide goals and enhance teacher leadership.

**Supporting Evidence**
- School leaders stipulate that all teachers in pre-kindergarten through grade 5 participate in inquiry team work during weekly meetings. Teacher team members record their inquiry work on “protocol” sheets. Protocol sheets elicit next steps for instruction, projected impact of the instructional adjustment or intervention, and application of the new strategies. It is required that team members email the protocol document from each meeting to school leaders and related service providers who share interest in the focal students.

- The fourth grade teacher team was observed analyzing a student writing response, which entailed comparing and contrasting themes in the literary texts, *Hiawatha* and *Birch Bark House*. Each teacher referred to a copy of the task and the Ready Gen writing rubric as she analyzed the student writing samples. Next steps were recommended by team members to assist the presenting teacher in developing targeted scaffolds for the focal students.

- Teacher team roles were evident during the meeting, such as presenting teacher and note-taker. During the teacher question and answer session, teachers shared that amongst the school wide opportunities for teacher leadership are participation in the Positive Behavior Intervention System team, teacher-leader professional learning team, and the role of grade level teacher team leader.
Findings
Across classrooms teaching strategies do not consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula leading to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of the use of higher-order thinking skills.

Impact
Teaching strategies that do not consistently provide multiple entry points limit student participation, engagement and critical thinking.

Supporting Evidence
- In some classrooms, teachers elicited higher-order thinking and facilitated student discussion, notably in a kindergarten class the teacher focused the lesson on using pictures to make meaning in stories. Students turned and talked to discuss the character’s expressions and make inferences about how the character felt. As partners talked, the teacher circulated amongst them, taking notes. Afterwards, the teacher asked students to share with the class what they discussed with their partners. The teacher also referred to her notes to highlight some of the conversations that she had heard. The teacher jotted students’ responses onto a graphic organizer on the whiteboard, as reinforcement. However, in some classrooms these strategies were not observed. For example, in a second grade class the teacher read aloud excerpts from an informational text and asked varied questions at a rapid-fire rate, not allowing students the time to respond fully. Although students appeared eager to discuss the topic, no discussion was facilitated and the lesson was teacher-centered.

- In some classrooms the planning and provision of multiple entry points for student engagement ant thinking were observed. For example in a fifth grade class students were observed to be fully engaged in text-based small-group discussions and at times debated over the question, “Do you think Henry Hudson was an effective leader?” At each table students were observed referencing the text and/or their notes, clarifying information for each other, and eliciting each other’s participation (as noted when one student asked a non-participatory student, “What do you think?”) The teacher circulated to push student thinking and constantly reminded students to back up their opinions and claims with text-based evidence.

- As observed in a third grade class, the teacher read aloud a poetry book, Around Your Way on Neighborhood Day. As she read the poem, she interspersed random, low-level questions. After reading the entire book, the teacher said, “What I want you to think about is how the text features help the story.” Students appeared confused and no one responded. She then asked, “What are text features?” A student responded, “Pictures”. The teacher then asked, “Did any of those words sound like you were trying to say something, but it didn’t quite say it?” In general the “lesson” was incoherent, had no apparent instructional focus, no clear teaching point, and provided no engagement for students.
Additional Findings

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders and teachers ensure that Common Core aligned curricula are coherent and integrate the instructional shifts. Across the grades curricula and academic tasks are designed to engage all students in rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact
The planning of Common Core aligned curricula support students in the engagement of rigorous habits and the use of higher-order skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The Ready Gen curriculum is implemented for English language arts instruction in kindergarten through grade 5. The school has integrated Teachers College Writing units and guided reading to supplement the Ready Gen program. The literacy program is facilitated through the workshop model. There is an emphasis on the balance of informational and literature-based texts throughout classroom libraries. The pre-kindergarten literacy program focuses on language development and vocabulary-building. *Big Day in Pre-k* provides the foundation for literacy instruction in this grade. The principal and her staff have vetted all curricular materials for Common Core alignment.

- Go Math is implemented for math instruction across the grades. Teacher teams make data-informed adjustments to the Go Math units. For example based upon the mid-winter benchmark data reflecting a deficit in the area of fractions, the third grade teacher team incorporated and emphasized the use of picture models, number lines, and concrete manipulatives to enhance students’ conceptual understandings within the new unit, *Understanding Fractions*.

- Social studies unit plans reflect an alignment of the Harcourt Social Studies curriculum, Ready Gen, the New York City Social Studies scope and sequence, to relevant Common Core Learning standards. Unit plans also contain summative and formative assessments and sequence of learning activities.

- At the foundation of science curriculum planning is the New York State science standards with an integration of relevant Common Core Learning Standards and relevant National Educational Technology Standards (NETS).

- The principal stated that throughout grades and subjects, teachers use the Depth of Knowledge scale and the Hess Rigor Matrix to develop and incorporate higher level questions and tasks into all unit and lesson plans. In addition, teachers incorporate Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) strategies that emphasize language objectives to provide greater access and support for English language learners.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers’ use of assessments and rubrics are aligned with the curricula and facilitate actionable feedback to students and teachers. Common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact
The use of curricula aligned assessments and rubrics facilitate feedback and curricular adjustment.

Supporting Evidence
- Across grades and subjects, teachers include items from summative exams of previous years as well as items from curricula to develop performance-based assessments, which are administered during designated benchmark periods throughout the year. Student performance trends such as reading progress and math proficiency are charted and analyzed by school leaders and teacher teams. In addition, teams also engage in item skill analyses.

- Throughout the grades, rubrics and checklists are used to guide and assess student writing. Teachers introduce the rubric to students at the onset of a unit of study. Students use the rubrics to guide their writing. Teachers provide rubric-linked feedback on student work. Commonly-used rubrics are Ready Gen writing rubrics, and the Common Core-aligned kindergarten developmental writing checklist.

- The principal shared that the Developmental Reading Assessment is the school wide Measure of Student Learning. Teachers administer the DRA at four benchmark periods throughout the year. Administrators track student progress at the school wide level, teacher teams track student progress at the grade level, and teachers track student progress at the class level. DRA scores are aligned to Fountas and Pinnell levels to enable teachers to plan for guided reading and appropriately match students to texts.
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
School leaders communicate high expectations to the staff and provide training and accountability structures. The faculty communicates expectations and provides feedback to families regarding student progress.

Impact
Teachers are supported in meeting the expectations of school leaders through professional development. Parents are informed about student progress regularly.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders convey expectations to the entire faculty through weekly memorandums, staff meetings, and ongoing feedback. Behavioral norms for students and faculty are constantly conveyed through implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS). The PBIS team meets regularly to monitor the efficacy of the program and compliance with the program’s tenets by all school community members.

- Teachers are provided with weekly professional learning opportunities covering topics such as Positive Behavior Intervention System, Ready Gen Curriculum planning, Smart Board training, the inquiry model, developing individualized educational plans, classroom management, pedagogical practices in pre-kindergarten, and new teacher training. In addition teachers participate in formal inter-visitation sessions and professional book studies.

- Parents receive a parent handbook annually that outlines school wide expectations, procedures, and protocols. Communication is also facilitated through the Parent/Teacher Connection Form, a monthly questionnaire for parents to communicate concerns about his/her child’s progress in specific curricular areas. This process provides ongoing two-way communication between home and school. In addition, parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers weekly to discuss concerns.