Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Public School 291
Elementary School 291
2195 Andrews Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453

Principal: Carlos Velez

Date of review: November 12, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Timothy Behr
The School Context

Public Schools 291 is an elementary school with 705 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 11% Black, 88% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<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>Focus</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>Proficient</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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<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<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>To what extent does the school…</td>
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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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</table>
**Findings**
The school conveys high expectations that cultivate a culture of learning, promotes parent involvement and supports learning. The staff, students, and families work together toward achieving the school’s goals.

**Impact**
The administration’s open door policy and the teacher’s approachability foster the involvement of all the school’s constituents and school leaders and teachers effectively provide parents and students with information regarding school and classroom high expectations via monthly newsletters, orientations, college visits, school spirit activities, and technology resulting in a supportive environment for families and students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Tuesday parent engagement activities include offering one to one parent support for ongoing and reciprocal conversations between the school and the majority of families to inform parents of the precise steps that are necessary to accelerate student progress.

- Student’s use of iPads at lunch time reinforces academic skills and informs teachers of next steps to accelerate student progress. A school website, a drop box sharing of lessons and resources, grade specific monthly information newsletters and my ON digital book website provide parents, students, and teachers with a solid stream of communication that provides a variety of information and clear expectations to support student learning and ensure that all constituencies play a role in the work and are responsible for the success of those expectations.

- Ongoing progress reports, parent letters and meetings, monthly calendars and newsletters empower parents to gain clear insights regarding the academic growth of their children. Parents expressed that, “they are aware of their child’s short and long term expectations and that teachers assist with their academic and social advancement.

- School leaders and teachers effectively provide parents and students with information regarding school and classroom level high expectations via monthly newsletters, orientations, college visits, school spirit activities, and technology as evidenced by 98-99% of the parents responding to the most recent School Survey indicating they were very satisfied with the school’s instructional core, systems for improvement, and school culture.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum Rating: Proficient

Findings
The school leader and teachers effectively align curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and emphasize meaningful learning tasks that promote rigor to improve student learning.

Impact
The school’s Common Core aligned rigorous curriculum meets the varied needs and interests of a wide range of students, yet consistent coherence in higher order academic tasks across the grades and subjects to prepare for the next level was not observed.

Supporting Evidence
- Teams of teachers meet to plan, share lessons and create tasks to build coherence across the grades and subjects. The school utilized the New York City alignment guidance to create a scope and sequence for math and Go Math texts are used as a resource. English language arts units are content based with a focus on non-fiction texts. Students consistently cite text based reference in oral and written work. The school also uses the New York City scope and sequence for social studies and science.

- The school has created, At-a-Glance core content area snap shots which empower teachers to reference academic initiatives, data points, portfolios expectations, and additional expectations based on students’ needs. The school also uses a special program At-a-Glance snap shot that delineates activities for student engagement expectations. Yet strategic instructional shifts embedded in a coherent way are not consistently integrated in all lessons.

- Completion of performance tasks and the results of iPad academic activities inform the content of lessons to modify and revise instruction. Go Math is used as a resource to provide curriculum extensions and enrichment activities. There is a focus on student vocabulary using Expeditionary Learning passages. These purposeful decisions promote planned instructional decisions to promote college and career readiness.
Findings
Students demonstrate high levels of engagement in well-aligned lessons that reveal a shared set of beliefs about how students learn best, and enthusiasm for learning to reach their potential via appropriately challenging tasks.

Impact
Lessons reflect purposeful grouping, differentiated instruction, and targeted questioning to maximize student learning as evidenced by student data and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a second grade English Language arts class students are assigned to a literacy group coded by colors which are based on skills. This scaffolding strategy enabled teachers to provide targeted assistance to students via flexible grouping. Students worked within a team and others with the teacher as the facilitator to enhance their ability to take ownership of their learning via meaningful learning experiences. For example one group of students was observed using supporting details when writing a letter to justify reasoning while another group used a storyboard to provide details of important events.

- Lesson plans reveal that teachers are using the Danielson Framework for Teaching to drive instructional practice. Across classrooms students were engaged in activities, and were assessed via exit slips, turn and talk activities, and cold calls. Student work showcased citing text in their written work which is the school’s instructional focus in English language arts.

- Project based learning, woven within the Core Knowledge curriculum used for grades K-2, provides early childhood students with exposure to cross-curricular interrelationships. In a first grade class students compared characters of a story using prior knowledge. Students in a kindergarten class were cutting and pasting the events on a sentence strip.
Findings
A variety of assessments which are aligned to the curriculum and consistent across classrooms and grades enables teachers to adjust instruction and inform planning.

Impact
Teachers identify their students' needs, strengths, and achievement by way of common assessments and checks for understanding to support targeted instruction across all subject areas.

Supporting Evidence
- Math unit assessments, School Net, student work products, Go Math, My math, and Encore are the following assessments which are aligned to the curricula and are being used this year. In English language arts the school uses Core Knowledge assessments in kindergarten through grade 2 and Expeditionary Learning assessments for grades 1 through 5 which are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, as well as the performance tasks. Rubrics provide students with commendations, recommendations, and next steps. The rationale for each assessment is to carefully monitor all students' progress.

- Periodic assessments with item detail analysis of distribution of student responses, common core-aligned math baseline assessments, writing assessments, and a second grade assessment based on grade 3 gaps are used to adjust curriculum, instruction, and academic intervention services support is derived from the aforementioned data.

- Teachers consistently check for understanding by analyzing data from unit tests, Degrees of Reading Assessment 2, conferences, New York City Benchmarks, baseline assessments, State assessments, and Measures of Student Learning results. Ongoing student self-assessment is derived from think-pair share activities, teacher questioning that checks for understanding, exit slips, and activation of prior knowledge. The administration meets with grades/teachers to help them with these processes.
Findings
Teachers participate in professional collaborations that foster reflection, provide options for determining effective instructional techniques and focus on improved student achievement toward goals for student groups.

Impact
Teacher teams regularly analyze student data and share responsibility for students on each grade, successfully planning together to improve instructional coherence and progress for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence
- Teams of teachers participate in collaborations that utilize the inquiry approach to create coherent classroom practice across all grades and subjects, which prioritize questioning and discussion techniques in reading and writing grounded in evidence from text.

- Based on the third grade results of the 2014 State test the school decided to administer the end of year grade 2 assessments which are aligned to the common Core Learning Standards to third grade students at the beginning of this school year. The purpose is to identify content area strands that need additional instruction. Teams of teachers reviewed the data and modified instruction to meet the academic needs of students. A summer curriculum writing team refined the curriculum prioritizing student writing, vocabulary, and numerical fluency skills.

- Teachers use assessment results to review and revise classroom lessons and sharing of best practices. The school uses item analysis of math and literacy standardized results to improve instructional practices via the identification of essential questions to guide teaching. Lesson plans incorporate data-based results to address the needs of targeted groups of students.