Quality Review Report
2015-2016

P.S. 235 Lenox School
Elementary-Middle School K235
525 Lenox Road
Brooklyn
NY 11203

Principal: Laurence Lord
Date of review: February 10, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen
P.S. 235 Lenox School is an elementary – middle school with 1,273 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 93% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 7% students with disabilities. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.4%.

### 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>Celebration</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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#### School Culture

<table>
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<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>Proficient</td>
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#### Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
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Findings
School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, State standards, and the instructional shifts. In addition, learning tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact
Purposeful decisions build curricular coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Higher order skills are embedded in curricula documents across grades and subjects for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- An elementary level math lesson plan was designed to deepen students’ understanding of place value and the properties of operations in order to perform multi-level arithmetic. The plan showed a strong emphasis on key math vocabulary as they use the strategy of drawing diagrams to solve division problems. A middle school level math planning document also prefaced student facility with key math terms. With a focus on evaluating algebraic expressions, the tasks require students to combine like terms, determine equivalency and discuss the role of variables in their processes. Student misconceptions were clearly articulated in both plans in order to anticipate checks for understanding during instruction.

- A review of English Language Arts (ELA) curricula documents from two different grade levels revealed that both were informed by student engagement with informational text. The writing oriented lesson was focused on students’ ability to develop a thesis statement and order arguments in order of importance. The reading lesson was for students to identify the main and supporting details. As an additional task, students had to explain the strategies they used in writing. Both plans required students to support their choices with evidence from non-fiction text.

- A lesson plan for the high school level Living Environment course listed higher order skills such as: analyzing results from the changes made to the genes, evaluating outputs for other groups, establishing cause and effect and using the internet to search for databases. The lesson in a middle school science class guided groups of students in assembling mini-ecosystems that they would need to maintain for the rest of the school year. The closing assessment of the lesson was for students to identify the difference between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and name biotic and abiotic elements in each. Both lesson plans required that students utilize content specific informational text in completing their tasks.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in professional collaborations on teams that are ineffectively connected to school goals or the inquiry approach.

Impact
The impact across teacher teams does not typically result in improved teacher practice or progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence
- A teacher team was observed utilizing a protocol that consisted of looking at student work, interpreting the work, implications for classroom practice and reflecting on the process. Potential next steps discussed were getting students to include quotes from the text to support their ideas and write conclusions that summarize or “wrap things up” for the reader.

- Teachers shared that while focusing on math instruction, they used the looking at student work protocol to reveal that students were having challenges with explaining and justifying their answers and math processes. To address this, teachers developed vocabulary word walls and sentence starters. Teachers noted that there were incremental increases between two assessments on short response tasks that required students to explain their math thinking.

- Though teachers meet regularly to discuss student work and instructional practices aligned to the school’s instructional foci of problem solving, questioning and discussion, there was limited evidence of the impact of these professional collaborations on teacher practice across grades.

- There was insufficient documentation of assessment data analysis showing student progress in targeted skills across grades.
## Additional Findings

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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### Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations regarding teaching and learning to staff. School staff regularly communicates with families regarding student progress and high expectations.

### Impact
Teachers are held accountable for high expectations. Parents have an understanding of their children’s progress on a path to college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence
- The implementation of close reading strategies is a school wide expectation being emphasized this year, specifically as it relates to problem solving in math. Memos requesting teachers to view specific online resources as well as on-site professional learning sessions highlight training opportunities aligned to this expectation. One memorandum thanks teachers for administering performance tasks that focused on problem solving using a close reading strategy. The performance task protocol for looking at student work requires, in step four, that teachers discuss the implications for classroom instruction. Specifically, teachers must address what skills such as close reading and word study they will revisit or employ.

- School leaders are also committed to communicating and upholding the district’s focus on questioning and discussion. Teachers conducted inter-visitations focused on questioning and discussion practices. They cited promising practices including the provision of ample time for students to read and discuss their texts, the use of discussion sticks for questioning, and scaffolded questions.

- Though parents stated that there were no clear and consistent communications or expectations regarding students from the elementary school matriculating into the screened middle school, they all agreed that they had constant access to teachers and information pertaining to their children’s progress through various means including in person conferencing, email and an online grade reporting system. The middle school uses an online grade reporting family communication system across all grades and content areas.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers consistently implement strategies that reflect the belief that students learn best when they collaborate and discuss with each other, to develop quality work products.

Impact
Teachers effectively use Danielson Framework for Teaching informed practices that support and promote student discussions that reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence
- A portion of a social studies class was dedicated to the timely topic of voting. The guiding question for the discussion was, “How would you persuade your brother that voting is important?” Student responses included the importance of watching political debates; how the right candidate may make decisions that can directly benefit your life, like free college; and the need to care about all Americans and not just yourself.

- A teacher prompted pairs of students to discuss and explain math steps with each other. Students pushed each other’s thinking with, “I agree, but how did you get your divisor,” and “Wait, but how can you divide a smaller number by a larger number?”

- Students in an ELA class worked with their teacher to make meaning of the different text structures used to organize writing. When the teacher asked, “How do you know this structure is compare and contrast?” a student responded, “There are signal words like but, like and different.” When discussing cause and effect, a student noted how the writing explained how something happened because of something else. There was a result. Students went on to cite excerpts from the text that supported their analysis and identified the correct text structure.

- A science class engaged in a teacher lead discussion about genetics. The teacher guided the conversation with prompts such as, “Where is the error there?”, “Who would like to answer that question?” and “Anyone want to agree or disagree?” Students responded, “I agree, but it could also be…”, “If that happens, then I have a question…” and “I think yes because…”
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  Rating: Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, assessment practices are aligned with the school’s curricula and consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Students and teachers are provided with actionable feedback regarding student performance and achievement. In addition, teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence
- Students from the elementary school tended to reference general student skills when asked how they would redo tasks at a higher level. Sample student comments included “I rushed and didn’t recheck it.”, “I’d study for the test.”, and “I ran out of time.” When asked to answer the question based on feedback they had received, their responses were more specific as they read from the comments or rubric. For example, “I have to work on my mechanics, like grammar and not making mistakes.” and “I should have added more details.” Although students had access to actionable feedback, it was not always meaningful, as they often just recited written feedback. One student did not understand the content of the scored rubric attached to his work.

- When discussing their work, middle school students noted, “I got a 41 because I have a problem with text structure based on analysis of data.” and “I didn’t have enough information because I only used one source.”

- During a math lesson, the teacher circulated around the room and used a checklist to track student engagement and understanding. After noticing a pattern of misconception, she got the class’ attention and asked, “How did some of you figure out your divisor?” After she accepted responses from two students, she stated, “Some of you wrote 11, but 11 does not appear in the word problem so how did you get 11? That is what you should write about.”

- In an ELA class, students analyzed their performance on an assessment and noted next steps for improvement. Students shared observations of their own work such as “I need to choose more relevant text-based evidence”, “I did not assess the right evidence”, and “My understanding of the situation was poor.” The teacher walked around the room, conferencing with those who needed guidance. At one point, he noticed a pattern, and said to the class, “Some are saying ‘I need to focus or work harder’. Think about the skill that you need to improve on and name it. Is it close reading, for example?”

- An inter-visititation observation form noted that students supported their own learning and each other, and partners were required to have their work checked together.