Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S./I.S. 323
Elementary-Middle School K323
210 Chester Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212

Principal: Linda Harris

Date of review: February 11, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley
The School Context

P.S./I.S. 323 is an elementary-middle school with 444 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 78% Black, 20% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.3%.

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>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
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<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>Focus</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>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</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>
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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>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
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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>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher and student work. Distributive leadership structures are embedded.

Impact
Teacher collaboration and leadership result in improved practice and mastery of goals for groups of students with teachers playing an integral part in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence
- During a vertical inquiry team meeting, teachers from grades 3, 4, 5, and 6 systematically analyzed writing samples from two fifth grade target students using a protocol that evaluated student thinking. Teachers described the strengths of the task and the student work, the gaps between the students’ current and desired performance, and the implications for teacher planning and next instructional steps. One teacher noted that a student who did not support her statement with details had not completed the two supplied graphic organizers. As a team, the teachers agreed to ensure that students complete graphic organizers before beginning to write.

- The vertical team identified students’ “organization of ideas” as an area for improvement based on reviewed performance tasks across grades. Teachers agreed to allot additional time to teaching the writing process, particularly the gathering and organizing stages, and to model the process from “big idea to a narrow focus” in order to support students in gathering key details to support their writing. Based on work samples presented, team members recommended the use of more detailed graphic organizers to support students’ organization of information to ensure more comprehensive writing.

- Target students have shown progress in writing stamina and in completing writing tasks across content areas based on writing rubrics and performance task results. One teacher shared that a 12:1:1 mainstreamed student has grown academically, and that his sharing of his learning has motivated his classmates. Across content areas, targeted groups of students have demonstrated growth in providing text-based evidence in writing moving from a Level 2 to a Level 3 based on rubric scoring.

- Each week a different grade-level teacher leads inquiry, creates an agenda, and presents student or teacher work. Teachers serve in leadership positions as data coach, mentors, programmers, and deans. Teachers implemented the RACE (Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain) strategy school wide and piloted the Engrade system, which is now used across the middle school.

- Teachers support the search, vetting, and selection of new teachers. Lead teachers recruit competent candidates, observe demonstration lessons, provide feedback to leadership on the quality of instruction, and recommend candidates that they believe will be a “good fit” for the school. Teacher leaders also play a key role in the selection of professional development topics.
Area of Focus

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Across classrooms teachers use and create rubrics and assessments aligned to the curricula and teaching practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding. Assessment feedback has yet to reach the level of specificity to provide a clear portrait of student mastery.

Impact
Although assessment data provides actionable feedback to students and teachers, meaningful feedback is not provided by all assessments so that next learning steps are not always clear for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use rubrics to provide feedback to students on most student work. Across classrooms, rubrics are aligned to the curriculum and assess students on a scale of zero to four. An informative writing rubric assessed focus, organization, development, language and vocabulary, and conventions.

- Four out of six students stated that teachers provide feedback on assignments most or all the time. Written feedback on informative writing pieces included, “Nice try. You were able to determine the central idea, but you left out many important details that support the central idea.”, and “You used details in your story. Reread when complete to check for the same sentences written twice.” On some assignments, teachers provide a percentage grade only or levels of achievement based on a rubric but do not include teacher feedback or next steps.

- In a third grade classroom, the teacher asked students to explain, “What is the distributive property?” One student responded, “When we break apart the bigger number.” The teacher then adjusted the question and posed it as a turn and talk question, “What is the distributive property, and how do we use it?” Students turned to a partner and explained. The teacher listened to student pairs and then asked a student to come up to the board to demonstrate an additional problem using the distributive property before sending students off to work independently.

- In a math classroom, the teacher asked students to explain their answers and identify their errors. In response, students used the term “inside the box” and “outside the box” to explain their division. The teacher then asked students to explain these terms and to use the math vocabulary associated with the numbers. Students proceeded to explain their answers using the terms dividend and divisor. Another student was then able to highlight her classmate’s error by explaining to him that he was confusing the divisor and dividend. Students in this classroom were able to self-assess and identify their next steps to correct their errors. This level of awareness was not evident in all classrooms visited.
Additional Findings

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum Rating: Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

Impact
Curricula coherence across grades requires all students to demonstrate higher order thinking in rigorous tasks that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence
- The school utilizes Common Core-aligned curricula which includes ReadyGen, GO Math, Code X, CMP3, Collections and Fundations. The curriculum includes a focus on informational texts, math problem solving, and short responses to text. The curriculum embeds the English Language Arts (ELA) instructional shifts, Balancing Informational and Literary Text and Writing from Sources, across grades and subjects. An ELA lesson requires students to, “Use evidence from texts and media sources to write about the immigrant experience with particular focus on how immigrants are often perceived in a new land.”

- The math curriculum embeds the instructional shift Deep Understanding, across grades. Plans for guided practice, checks for understanding, reflection, and discussion were present in the vast majority of lessons collected. A third grade lesson plan asks students to reflect on the essential question, “How can you use the strategy ‘draw a diagram to multiply with multiples of 10’?” The plan also asks students to, “Write a description of how a diagram can help you solve 2 x 40.” A fifth grade lesson asks students to explain in a note to the teacher, “How can you use a model to divide by a decimal?” and respond to the journal prompt, “Write a word problem that involves dividing by a decimal. Include a picture of the solution using a model.”

- Across grades and subjects, the curricula includes the close reading of text and prompts for text-based responses. An eighth grade lesson plan asks students to work in small groups to read selected texts and complete a “close and critical reading” graphic organizer. The organizer asks students to summarize the text, identify the main idea, determine the craft and structure of the text, determine meaning, and make applications to their own lives. An eighth grade student responded, “The central idea of the passage is about a speaker who feels unwanted because she is from a different country. In the text it says, ‘What is it like when the teacher speaks too fast and you are the only one who can’t understand?’ This explains that she feels like an outsider…”

- The vast majority of lessons collected include questions and academic tasks aligned to Webb’s Depth of Knowledge Levels 3 and 4, Strategic Thinking and Reasoning and Extended Thinking. A science lesson plan includes the objective, “Students will be able to create a hypothesis, collect and analyze data to determine which foods are sources of carbohydrates.” The lesson also asks students to identify questions they have before beginning of the experiment and analyze their results after conducting the experiment.
Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms teaching practices, consistently provide multiple entry points into the curriculum and opportunities for discussion and demonstration of thinking.

Impact
All learners have access to appropriately challenging tasks that support high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence
- In a seventh grade lesson, the teacher had students share reflections to surface misconceptions. After a student shared the difficulty he had with an inequality problem, the teacher called on another student to help “dig him out”. The teacher prompted the student to ask his classmate a series of questions that led the student to discover the solution to his own problem. The classmate asked, “What is the first step in solving?” The second student responded, “I could have used an inverse operation and divide it.”

- Across classrooms, teachers modeled activities for students before sending them to work independently and provided support as needed. In a math classroom, the teacher modeled the distributive property and created an anchor chart that included an example, steps, and visual models. Students who needed support returned to the chart for assistance. Also, the teacher provided manipulatives for individual students who required concrete models. During an eighth grade lesson, the teacher assigned differentiated math tasks to students based on their demonstrated understanding on the previous day’s exit ticket. One group worked with the teacher, one group worked independently on solving one-step inequalities, and another group solved inequalities without negative rational numbers.

- In an ELA classroom, students watched a video of a street performer dressed in an orange jumpsuit, who held a sign that stated he was an immigrant and invited strangers to shake his hand. All students actively watched the video and participated in the discussion. Students broke into groups to respond to the question, “Was his performance effective?”, and “Why?” Students used information from their texts to discuss how the performer chose to represent immigrants and how Americans perceive immigrants in the United States.

- During a kindergarten subtraction lesson, students worked in three groups. Students in one small group solved basic subtraction problems with teacher support and using manipulatives. A second larger group solved basic subtraction problems up to 12 by drawing circles and other symbols on their worksheets. A third small group solved basic subtraction up to 12 using mental math only. All students actively participated. During a science lesson students were engaged in discussion while conducting a scientific test for carbohydrates. Students debated whether or not carbohydrates are good for the human body. One student stated, “Carbohydrates are a good source of energy.” A second student responded, “They can be good but there has to be a limit. Too much is harmful.”
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  Rating: Proficient

Findings
Faculty and staff consistently communicate high expectations to families connected to college and career readiness and offer students ongoing support.

Impact
Families understand student progress and students are prepared for the next level of study.

Supporting Evidence
- The school communicates with parents via class newsletters, phone calls, text messages, email, backpacked notes and flyers, and parent teacher conferences. Parents state that communication is consistent and that they attend parent meetings on Tuesday evenings, where teachers share curriculum expectations and information about upcoming events. Parents can access student grades, attendance, and monitor progress on the online system, Engrade. Parents also receive student progress reports between fall and winter report cards.

- The school has shared information on the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. Parents attended math game night and learned about the instructional shifts in math. Parents have received workbooks for students to practice skills at home and teacher support on how they can help their children at home. One parent shared that teachers “help you help your child” by providing one-on-one parent support. A parent also shared that she received help in Spanish. Additionally, parents receive support with the high school selection process. The school motto is “I am a winner and an achiever. I am gifted, talented, and smart. We are a team of winners.” Students are encouraged to achieve their best and teachers celebrate students for achievement in the content areas. Every classroom in the school is named after an historical “winner” or “achiever” and each classroom identifies students as writers, readers, and mathematicians of the month and celebrates their achievement by displaying their photos.

- Students receive summer work packets that prepare them for the upcoming year’s grade-level work. The school meets with grade 7 and 8 students to prepare them for the high school application process. Students shared that teachers help them research schools and determine which schools make sense. One student stated, “They also help us search the travel time to make sure it is not too far away.”

- The school promotes college and career awareness through a school wide College Day on which staff members wear their college shirts and share information about their colleges with students. The school also hosts a Career Day for grades 3 through 8, which brings in community members who share information about their careers and career paths. Students in fourth grade participated in a college awareness project in which they researched colleges and then produced an informational brochure on their own fantasy college. Students identified key information associated with their fantasy college including the name, areas of study, location, and tuition costs.