Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 040 Augustus Saint-Gaudens

Elementary School M040

319 East 19 Street
Manhattan
NY 10003

Principal: Susan Felder

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Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons
The School Context

P.S. 040 Augustus Saint-Gaudens is an elementary school with 628 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 8% Asian, 3% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 64% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.2%.

School Quality Criteria

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<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
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<th>School Culture</th>
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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>Additional Findings</td>
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<th>Systems for Improvement</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>
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Findings
All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations aligned to school goals. Opportunities are embedded to empower teachers to assume leadership roles that directly impact key decisions across the school.

Impact
The work of teacher teams has resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence and improved pedagogy, student work, and progress. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence
- Horizontal and vertical teams meet and work collaboratively to ensure that units of study continue to address the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Teams also analyze student work, establish small group plans, and revise units and assessments. Professional learning opportunities on analyzing student work and data, questioning, and student engagement are provided weekly for teachers. The school developed a protocol for collaboratively examining student work adapted from the Milwaukee Mathematics Partnership. The group selects a facilitator and another teacher volunteers to present three to five work samples from students to show a range of reasoning and give background on students. The team discusses the work, asks questions, recognizes areas of strength, names student needs, reflects and discusses the implication to teaching and learning. Teachers state that the protocol provides a common forum for examining student work.

- Additionally, teachers stated that communication happens all the time as part of the teacher team learning culture. They enjoy working together and sharing information. They shared that one of the most effective forms of professional development is visiting classrooms to look at environments and to observe colleagues. Teachers regularly visit classes independently. One teacher stated, “I can learn from my colleagues during team meetings and intervisitations.” Another teacher stated, “We have learned so much about reading and writing through sharing information and strategies across grades and meetings, such as designing differentiated homework packets based on weekly analysis of student performance data.”

- Teachers stated that leadership structures have led to thoughtful involvement in school matters. Each grade has an assigned subject leader in the areas of reading and writing. The teachers share responsibilities including facilitating planning in their particular content area and act as liaisons with administration in regards to communication and record keeping. The writing of the monthly newsletter is shared by all teachers in the grade. Moreover, teachers play a vital role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. Based on Measure of Teacher Practice data, teachers needed support with classroom discussion. The school began to study the Socratic seminar and as a result students are writing more reflectively. Teachers engage in lesson studies that highlight schoolwide values and dispositions such as independence, communicating ideas and connections, and the expectation that the math makes sense. A teacher stated, “We are very lucky that we can collaboratively take an introspective look at our lessons to improve student outcomes.”
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
Common assessments create a clear picture of student progress. Although teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, student assessment practices lack strategic application.

Impact
Data from common assessments leads to adjustments that positively impact student learning. Although teachers make effective adjustments in the classroom to meet all students’ learning needs, feedback from peers is imprecise.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use a range of common assessments that include Fountas and Pinnell, running records, and Teachers College on-demand writing assessments and narrative reading learning progression. The methodical analysis of assessment results has led to the development of instructional goals for teaching and the reinforcement of skills across all subject areas. On the 2014 English Language Arts (ELA) examination, in the category of all students 10% performed at Level 1 and 71% performed at Levels 3 and 4. Armed with this information, classroom and intervention teachers reinforce the ELA units of study taught and provide extensive supports. During small group instruction, teachers implemented strategies and targeted academic vocabulary, including the use of paired texts on common themes, to help students build prior knowledge. Students in these small groups engaged in discussions on thematic topics that built fluency and facility with academic vocabulary. As a result, on the 2015 ELA examination, only 3% performed at Level 1 and 74% performed at Level 3 and Level 4. Furthermore, the school consistently gathers targeted information from assessments to track student progress towards goals in all content areas for all learners.

- Teachers gather data that includes rubric-based performance on formative assessments and other student work to ascertain levels of student learning. The use of data to inform and adjust instruction in all content areas is consistent across classrooms. Classroom visits and meetings with teachers and students revealed that feedback on student work includes next steps. For example, on a grade 3 reading log reflection a student received the following feedback: “Continue to work on setting new goals, building stamina, and climbing the hurdle of hard words. Next, we will work on developing theories about characters and supporting our claims with text evidence. Happy Reading!” Across classrooms, teachers were observed conferring with students and providing them with strategies for improvement. In a few classes, students sought the teacher to validate their answers.

- Students self-assess and give feedback to partners as peer-assessment. In a math class, students used conferring questions to coach one another. Questions included, “How does what you’re saying match your model?” and “What did you do to solve this?” Although students are providing feedback to one another and developing their ability to give constructive feedback, some feedback given is tangential and does not always provide students with details. During the interview, students shared writing samples that were peer-assessed. Students also shared work products and compared earlier writing to more current pieces and explained their next learning steps are to add more details, write more complex sentences, and to use text evidence to support their claims.
Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are Common Core-aligned, integrate the instructional shifts, and are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact
Across grade and subject areas, students are engaged in coherent curricula that promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence
- The school uses the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) and a balanced literacy approach to reading and writing instruction that stresses the essential components of reading through explicit teaching of phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension. The TCRWP units of study are designed with the Common Core in mind, allowing students to practice the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills essential to their grade-level development across subjects. The literacy lessons build upon each other throughout each unit, across the year, and across subjects to allow students to make connections and use prior knowledge to further their own understanding. Additionally, the school uses A Story of Units as the schoolwide math curriculum designed to help children understand the fundamentals of math and sharpen accuracy and problem-solving skills. Modules follow the Common Core approach to lesson structure. Fluency, concept development and application are layered to guide students through the math.

- TCRWP units integrate select social studies curriculum content. Social studies content and curriculum is determined by the New York City Scope and Sequence. The school uses the New York City Department of Education’s Full Option Science Systems, which is based on learning progressions, to provide students with opportunities to investigate ideas in increasingly complex ways over time. In a grade 4 energy unit, students receive a series of diagrams showing an open and closed circuit. Students are asked to write a prediction for each circuit determining if the circuit will produce light. School leaders and faculty reinforce instructional shifts in all subject areas. Accordingly, students in a music class were tasked to select a song to include in the PS 40 Songster, which is a collection of songs, to present a convincing argument for its inclusion, and to design a cover of their Songster song.

- After reviewing writing samples, teachers noticed patterns within essays. Students could cite evidence, state claim and quote passages. However, teachers realized that the next instructional step is to strengthen their inferential thinking. As a result, teachers generated specific lessons to incorporate into their writing units, emphasizing skills such as stating the claim and finding supporting quotes from the text. A review of lesson plans revealed that all lessons engage prior knowledge, provide for quick checks for understanding, account for re-teaching needs and small group activities tailored to individuals and groups of students, and address essential questions. Additionally, teams use data to determine the highest achieving students who need an extra challenge. Teachers created early-finisher packets. For example, grade 4 students who completed their classwork early are challenged to read about possible situations that they might encounter on an important test. Students identified possible strategies and realistic solutions that they could try if they encounter a difficult word or passage.
Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Students are engaged in creating meaningful work products and in rigorous discussions.

Impact
All classroom teachers deliver lessons aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teachers, resulting in high levels of engagement and in meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence
- All teachers follow the workshop model and rubrics are standards-based. This affords students the opportunity to peer-assess, and provide next steps to their fellow classmates. During classroom visits students self-assessed using rubrics, participated in discussions with peers and asked critical thinking questions. Students used the model, Restate, Answer, Text-based, and Explain, as an expectation for short responses.

- Across classrooms, students worked independently and in various group structures based on data, interest and choice. Students are engaged in activities with rigorous cognitive demands including high levels of discussion among students without scaffolds from the teachers. The Say Something Protocol was used to ensure all students make meaningful contributions to the discussion and develop the skills needed to serve as leaders. The use of protocols in classrooms allows students to extend their thinking and make meaning as they engage in learning content.

- Teachers across classrooms strategically used scaffolds and multiple entry points to provide access to content for all students. During lessons, teachers used various types of graphic organizers and mental models to support different types of learners. In a grade 4 ELA class, students participated in differentiated literacy stations and small groups. Students rotated through the stations where they read their books and recorded their thinking on Post-Its at station one, evaluated their classmates’ short answer responses and compared their scores with an answer key at station two. At station three, students read a non-fiction passage that was segmented into paragraphs, and used signal words to identify the organizational structure. At the vocabulary center, students practiced using context clues to identify the meaning of vocabulary words in a game-based activity.

- Across a vast majority of classrooms, student work products and discussions signify scholarly prowess that challenges students. In an ELA class, students were given text on five things they should know about owning a bulldog. Students were presented with discussion prompts to promote high-level discussions. One student stated, “The text structure is compare and contrast because two dogs are being compared, additionally the text uses the signal word of whereas.” During a first grade Integrated Co-Teaching reading lesson, students were working on determining the change in the character’s feelings and thinking about why the change may have occurred. The students were asking themselves the question, “Did the characters learn a lesson here?” Students were observed using Post-Its to write about the character’s feelings and turning and talking to their partners about the evidence from the text that supported their ideas. During the share period, students reflected on their station experience and shared how their partner helped them to improve.
Findings
School leaders incorporate various trainings to communicate high expectations consistently to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations and partner with families.

Impact
The communication of high expectations has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability with staff. Families successfully support student progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence
- The faculty handbook outlines expectations for classroom instruction and behavioral expectations. School leaders review this manual with the entire faculty. In addition, administrators and teachers discuss high expectations during the individual planning conferences. School leaders conduct observations followed by post-observation meetings and provide specific feedback with the stated expectation that the feedback will be put into action and seen during follow-up observations. Schoolwide professional expectations for the instructional team are reinforced. For example, the professional development committee, using feedback from the staff, created two six-week cycles for the first half of the school year. Cycle one focuses on grade level groups based on school goals and cycle two focuses on collecting, analyzing and applying schoolwide data.

- The principal stated that a strong connection between home and school is essential in establishing trust and understanding between parents and educators and contributes to student success in school. The school leaders communicate important information and messages from the staff. School leaders and staff also communicate with parents through a bi-monthly grade newsletter that includes curriculum updates, the goals for current units of study and resources to extend lessons and practice skills learned in the classroom at home. For example, in the March update in grade 1, the teacher shared the big focus of retelling in reading. Students retell books they read independently and shared a picture of a retelling chart used in class. The update also included strategies to help develop fluency with “tricky words.” The newsletters also clearly outline the expectations of the Common Core and the instructional shifts that emphasize critical and analytical thinking and problem-solving using a constructivist approach. Eureka Math tips for parents are included with key words and ideas in the module and what came before and after this module. Additionally, periodic parent workshops provide parents with learning opportunities to support their children. Parents shared that they attended a Teachers College Reading and Writing workshop. One parent stated, “I can help my child improve her reading goals.”

- The school partners with parents by providing progress reports that share expectations. For example, by the end of grade 1, children are expected to be able to read level J books. By the end of grade 2, children are expected to be able to read unfamiliar level M books independently. The school provides information about leveled books and TCWRP benchmark reading levels and marking period assessments to successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations. In order to foster a collaborative relationship, the school asked the parents about their thoughts on workshops, school trips and choice of books for the book club. In the grade 2 parent book club, parents discuss the selected book and identify potential challenges of the text. Parents share they feel good that they are partners in their children’s learning.