Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S.076 A. Philip Randolph

Elementary – Middle School M076

220 West 121st Street
Manhattan
NY 10027

Principal: Charles DeBerry

Date of review: November 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción
P.S. 076 A. Philip Randolph is an elementary – middle school with 508 students from grades pre-kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 79% Black, 17% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 18% students with disabilities. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 89.8%.

## 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>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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
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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>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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### 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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<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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide necessary training. School leaders and staff engage in successful partnerships with parents and community that effectively communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact
Successful partnerships between parents, school staff and the community result in a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders use Danielson Framework for Teaching Component 3B (questioning and discussion techniques) as a lever for increasing accountable talk and discussion. A teacher survey identified questioning was one of the areas where teachers requested support. Teacher completed a “Teacher Goal Setting Template” form and set goals for the Danielson Framework including 3B. The school engaged in a school-wide Book Club on questioning and discussion. A recent Danielson observation by the principal included feedback to a teacher that stated, “The use of open-ended questions invited students to think and offer multiple possible answers. An observation report from the assistant principal included the following feedback, “It was a pleasure to see your students engage in a discussion around finding textual evidence about the story setting.”

- The school has many connections with community-based organizations that support and serve parents. School leaders and faculty recognize the powerful role of parents in student lives and that strong partnerships with parents are the key to student success. During the interviews, parents spoke clearly about receiving support from the school on understanding the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) in order to help with homework. Parents also spoke about the Kids at Hope program at the school. This national program creates strong parent partnerships through professional development modules that help parents develop emotional resiliency, self-esteem and mindsets in children to instill success.

- The school has strong partnerships with the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ), College for Every Students and A Cut Above. These programs focus on student achievement and college preparation using College and Career Readiness Benchmarks. HCZ staff partners with families providing academics, social services and support to parents so they can continue to focus on helping their children succeed. Parents receive training on understanding the social-emotional needs of middle school students and partner with the school to ensure that students avoid risky behaviors and stay engaged through community involvement, sports and focus on academic success. Parents credit the principal’s high expectation for all students to go to college for the collaborative school culture where staff, community and parents all focus on student success.
**Area of Focus**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school curricula and assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**
Feedback and rubrics are valued by the school; however, the use of misaligned rubrics provides limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and inconsistent classroom checks for understanding limit the effectiveness of adjustments to meet students’ learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Although rubrics are ubiquitous across grades K-8, they are not always aligned to instructional shifts or actual demand of the task. For example, in a unit that introduced students to concepts of standard and non-standard measurement, students were supposed to compare the length of a group of objects and explain their understanding of how a standard measurement is useful. However, the accompanying rubric did not focus on student understanding of standard measurement. While the rubric did rate explanation as a component, there was no criterion for the explanation. Additionally, the rubric included grammar and punctuation as component. This led to feedback like “You have a general understanding of standard measurement. Next time look at punctuation and grammar.” Similarly, a rubric for a culminating task on narrative essays, which required students to focus on sequential organization, dialogue and sensory details, did not measure these components and instead measured “command of conventions”, “figurative language”, and “story development and ideas”. This misalignment led to feedback such as, “You are unable to follow story development and ideas”, on a Level 1 paper. This yielded no relevant teacher data on student understanding of the components of the school-designed task and the student feedback did not provide actionable next steps.

- In classroom and in student interviews, students could articulate the use of the rubric as a tool for assessment and for providing them with their next learning step. Students were able to recite the next step provided by the teacher and their rubric score sheet. When questioned about what their feedback meant or how they would make it actionable, students either did not understand the feedback or what they needed to do. In an interview with a student with a level 1 score in English Language Arts (ELA) the written teacher feedback was “You need to work on mechanics.” The student did not know what “mechanics” meant. When pressed further, the student said, “I guess it means I need to add more details.”

- Checks for understanding were observed in two classrooms: a science class and ELA class. An exit slip stating, “As a physicist or engineer who works for a major car company, why is it important to test a vehicle with more than one trial?”, was observed in a class following student collection of trial data on velocity and distance. However, during the class students struggled to understand the velocity time graph and formula, not the real life application. During a social studies class on European Exploration, students sat in different groups. One group was using the computer for research. No checks for understanding were observed and a third of the students sat there with blank organizers because they did not understand the task. When two students were asked what they were supposed to be researching online, one student replied, “I don’t know, but it is something about Explorers” Others stated that they did not know what they were expected to look for in the internet search.
Additional Findings

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula as well as uneven levels of discussion, student thinking and participation.

Impact
Student work products and discussions reflect uneven engagement in challenging tasks and levels of higher-order thinking skills and participation.

Supporting Evidence
- Students were observed in groups for instruction; however, the supports and entry points for these groups were not always apparent. In a grade 7 class working on solving algebraic equations using the distributive property, students were working in different groups based on student data. They were working on different tasks according to need and actively using strategies to solve their set of problems. However, in an early grade ELA class working on a unit on farms all students worked on the same task. The teacher worked with one group while two other groups sat independently with incomplete worksheets despite additional adults in the classroom.

- In a grade 8 science class, students were required to collect observational trial data on the velocity and distance of a car on a track. They needed to record changes in velocity or distance when the angle of decent changed. Students were to use this observational data as the basis for the explanation of their hypothesis on how the change of the angle reflected the formula they were studying. While many students were actively engaged in both conversation and in writing, there were no supports in place for the English Language Learners who sat in their seat with their observational data and could neither engage in the conversation nor write an explanation of their hypothesis.

- Student conversation, or “Team Talk” as the school calls it, is a school focus and an expectation; however, this practice is uneven across grades. For example, in a middle school ELA class students sat in small groups and used accountable talk stems to discuss the merits pathos, ethos and logos as a technique to persuade the reader. However, this practice did not result in high level conversations in an early grade math class on multiple representations. In this class, the teacher had successfully elicited from the students the various methods of representing preference for ice cream flavors. Students readily offered bar graphs, pictographs, frequency and tally table as representation models. During this class, students would be applying these models again, but this time the chart would be for favorite pets. Some students were already talking about the differences and uses of these models, when the teacher redirected the students to turn and talk with a partner about the pet they would select to graph and did not ask students to discuss which graph or chart they would like to use and why.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula and academic tasks are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate the instructional shifts as well as emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order skills across all grades and subjects.

Impact
The school-tailored curricula and academic tasks build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- The school uses the approved Common Core-aligned curricula, such as Ready Gen, Go Math, CodeX and Connected Math in Practice 3 (CMP3). These curricula ensure that students are engaged in learning academic vocabulary, writing from sources, writing opinion pieces and using cite-based evidence as well as developing fluency, mathematical reasoning and multi-step problem solving. The curriculum is supplemented by Fundations, word work to ensure that students can read vocabulary words that appear in content. The school has also incorporated units from Teachers College Writing Workshop to create more robust writing across all grades and subjects.

- The school curriculum has made a decision to include essential questions. This decision was made to ensure that students would be involved in enduring understandings rather than a particular text or on a certain skill. For example, in a Grade 7 CodeX unit on Athletes, rather than focus just on a specific athlete and his skill or fame, the school included an essential question for this unit: “What can we learn about ourselves from studying athletes?” This unit originally involved one grade level text and the school differentiated this unit by including various mentor texts at different levels and a short film. This resulted in the unit being more global in perspective, differentiated for readers on different levels or language ability and incorporated the instructional shift of writing from sources.

- Units and lesson plans emphasize rigor and higher order thinking skills through questions and tasks that demand students to think and explain what they have learned. Answers are not at the surface. For example, a unit on the Battle of Big Horn (Think like a Historian) asks students to use close reading to determine the sourcing of the Cameron Report as a document. It asks students to think about the type of document that it is and to answer the question, “Why was this document written?” and “What is its purpose?” Similarly, a lesson plan on velocity asks students to provide a written explanation to the following prompt, “As a physicist or engineer that works for a major car company, why is it important to test a vehicle with more than one trial like you and your group mates did with this speed investigation?”
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development
Rating: Proficient

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations to promote the CCLS. Distributive leadership structures provide teachers with opportunities to build leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions.

Impact
The school has multiple teams that ensure that teachers both work in inquiry-based professional collaboration and are involved in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher teams are involved in weekly meetings that focus on refining curriculum and tasks as well as developing performance-based assessments for the school’s blended curriculum. Teachers meet and use a modified tuning protocol to examine the units to be taught. In keeping with the school’s goal of ensuring there is differentiation for struggling students, a portion of the team meeting is dedicated to developing multiple entry points.

- The focus of vertical team inquiry meeting was on the strength of student writing specifically the concern that students in grade 8 struggled with counterclaims. The team began by reviewing the Measure of Student Learning data from the previous meeting. Teachers in each grade took a few minutes to identify a concern in a piece of student writing. A recorder memorialized the following observations: in social studies, students struggled with creating strong claims and this was due to lack of sufficient cite-based evidence. Although this team was not a grade 8 team, each team member understood that the grade they represented in this meeting contributed to the grade 8 struggle with counterclaims. Each grade shared out a noticing in their grade’s writing that they felt might contribute to the problem. For example, the grade 7 teacher stated that these students could write about the evidence that they collected, but could not analyze the strength of their hypothesis. The grade 6 teacher stated that students in grade 6 could recognize evidence, but when writing reverted back to their own opinion. The teachers then began to strategize ways to strengthen the use of cite-based evidence as the basis for writing and to develop a plan for teaching analysis as a way to develop a connection between the evidence and the claim to create alignment in writing in grade 8.

- The school has many teacher teams that serve in an advisory capacity to the school leaders. Teachers participate in the Financial Input Committee, Professional Development Team and in various vertical and horizontal teams. They look at student data and needs and make recommendations regarding curriculum and instruction. For example, a kindergarten teacher stated that teachers in kindergarten felt that it would be helpful to implement classroom learning centers again. This idea was shared with school leaders and subsequently, teachers set up a kindergarten class as a lab site to examine the ideal of centers and have other kindergarten teachers learn best practices for implementing centers in their classrooms.