The School Context

P.S. 154 Jonathan D. Hyatt is an elementary school with 397 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 41% Black, 56% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 20% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.1%.

School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</td>
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<tr>
<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>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of:</th>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provides supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

<table>
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<th>Area of:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The school leader consistently communicates high expectations to the entire staff, and provides training for those expectations. The school leader and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Impact
The school leader’s consistent communication of high expectations has resulted in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school expects students to self-regulate and experience a stimulating and challenging classroom environment that addresses their social and emotional needs. The school leader communicates expectations regarding academics in many ways including weekly announcements, staff handbook, professional development workshops, emails, and one-on-one conversations and analysis of student data emails sent to teachers. A weekly newsletter to staff addressed classroom environment and the use of vocabulary supports. The school leader conducts classroom observations to assess the implementation of the set expectations and provides feedback. For example, feedback included comments like, “Over the next two weeks, I will schedule three inter-visitations for you...During each of these inter-visitations, you and I will look closely at the organizational structure and routines in place, the teacher’s language, tone and the way the teacher models a teaching point.”

- Staff stated that they all share students and feel equally responsible. They hold each other accountable in multiple ways including team leaders meeting with the school leader, who then goes back to the team and shares information discussed. During team meetings, teachers share lessons and expected practices, use Google Drive to document meeting notes and view best practices discussed, and randomly select teachers to be visited via walkthroughs to assess the implementation of expectations, with peer feedback provided based on the walkthrough. The school also has two model classrooms that teachers visit and, together with the model teacher after the visit, debrief and plan for future instruction.

- The school communicates with families via weekly score reports for math and English Language Arts (ELA) student performance, letters, parent workshops and a parent handbook that details expectations, participation on the School Leadership team and tips for parents as co-educators. A parent workshop held earlier in the year addressed independent reading and how to support their child at home with reading. There are principal’s breakfasts with parents that cover topics such as early college awareness and tips for supporting the academic success of their child. Review of a parent-teacher collaborative meeting agenda indicates that they reviewed student data regarding academic progress, attendance goals, and student outcomes with reading level and high frequency words that are tracked over time. Reading Level tracking data indicates progress over time in these areas. Parents also volunteer in the office as classroom parents, on picture day and at other school functions.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners.

Impact
Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products; however, there were missed opportunities to further push critical thinking through higher order questioning and lesson extensions.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers believe students learn best by doing, taking ownership of learning and engaging in group work. Teaching practices include students working on various tasks including: identifying key ideas and details from text, use of academic vocabulary, writing from sources, and making real life connections and applications. For example, a grade 5 class engaged students in fantasy fiction book club work around comparing and contrasting the atmosphere of their texts to their world. In a math class, students were using different strategies to determine how many boxes of ten can be made with a given quantity of truffles and how many leftovers will there be from a given quantity. Students worked with their partners designing different sized boxes for truffles making statements like, “keep the width the same and multiply the length.”

- Teachers’ lessons in most classes were scaffolded to provide access to diverse learners. This was done via small group work, thinking prompts, graphic organizers, and leveled text. For example, a grade 3 ELA lesson on setting and character grouped students based on reading level with adult support for students on and below level. All students were provided copies of the model text and identified students had sections of the chapter highlighted in order to focus attention on the setting and characters in the story. A grade 5 math lesson on algebraic expressions had three different leveled groups: Group 1, with students requiring the most support, used a multiples of 6 and 8 support page to help them solve equivalent expressions step by step. Group 2 students also used the support page, finding all possible combinations. Group 3 students were given the freedom to develop their own methods for solving the problem and to prove they found all combinations.

- Although students were provided multiple entry points to the lessons observed, opportunities for critical thinking were compromised with predominantly limited or lower level questioning observed being asked by the teachers. For example, in a grade 2 class, students were asked to envision as they read. The two questions asked during the lesson were, “As you are running, what do you see?” and “What movie is going on in your head?” A grade 3 lesson on a book about Harriet Tubman included questions like, “Where is the setting?” and, “Who lived in the cabin?” One student responded, “[In an] old log cabin.” In addition, in most classes, high quality extensions were not observed or planned for. For instance, in a grade 3 ELA class the teacher extended learning by requiring students to make a mini-poster and presentation, and a grade 3 math lesson provided 4 challenge questions.
Additional Findings

Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The school leader and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts, resulting in coherence across grades and subjects. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks.

Impact
The school’s curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use one curriculum for reading and writing units across all grades based on grade level progression. Literature and art Scope and Sequence indicates the seven units covered at each grade, starting with building a reading unit, book clubs by unit three and test preparation by unit five. In math, the curriculum is used across all grades with Contexts for Learning as a supplement. Social Studies follows the New York Scope and Sequence in kindergarten through grade 2, and Teachers College social studies content units in grades 3-5. School-wide backwards planning takes place with a focus on the needs at each grade level. Non-fiction reading and writing is infused in social studies units. For example, in one grade 2 social studies unit, students are required to write an informational book about a community with facts organized into sections.

- Curricular alignment to Common Core is evident with integration of shifts to include, but not limited to, using academic vocabulary, incorporating evidence to build argument, balancing evidence with analysis, writing from sources, reading and writing informational and literary text, focus, fluency and deeper understanding.

- Higher order skills are emphasized for all learners, such as visual thinking strategies being used to encourage critical thinking. Contexts for Learning in math engages students in conceptual understanding via methods such as investigations and open-ended questions. Higher-order questions are planned for whole-class as well as smaller student discussions. Essential questions and guided questions are developed with the support of the Depth of Knowledge wheel. One example of an essential question is, “How can I use all I have learned about how authors develop themes to study the way authors approach common themes in fantasy?” To address rigor, pre-planned parallel teaching mini-lessons are crafted, and differentiated tasks, leveled readers, and scaffolds based on students’ reading level and utilized. The “what” and “why” are also considered by teachers as part of the planning process.
Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient
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**Findings**
Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

**Impact**
Assessments and rubrics provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. The results of common assessments are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

**Supporting Evidence**
- Common assessments used include Developmental Reading Assessments, Running Records, Measures of Student Learning in ELA and math, high frequency words, on-demand writing, math beginning and end-of-year assessments and unit assessments, and pre- and post-assessments in reading and writing in the upper grades. Teachers also use rubrics including, but not limited to, New York State grades 4-5 writing evaluation, learning progression for narrative reading and writing, talking progression, and a Performance Task Common Core Standards evaluation tool. Feedback provided to a student on a writing piece included next steps such as, “Provide a concluding statement that follows from the topic and information presented,” and “Good job using the formula V=l x w x h; remember to label all of your answers in cubic units.”

- Across grades and subject, teacher use assessments to monitor student progress. Based on data from a grade 5 writing pre-test, students were able to support their reasons with facts and details from the text and explain their thinking. However, students were not logically ordering their reasons. As a result, lessons such as using evidence to build arguments and balancing evidence with analysis were removed and replaced with lessons on ranking reasons in a logical order. One grade 2 math chapter pre-test indicated that some students needed more reinforcement in adding two digit numbers by one digit numbers. As a result they received additional support with small group instruction, which prepared them to begin using strategies for two digit by two-digit addition. Three lessons were removed from the unit to allow more time for students to master this strategy.

- Based on data from Realistic Fiction and Historical Fiction units, adjustments were also made. The Realistic Fiction pre-test revealed that students were listing events from the story with no clear sequence. The unit framework was altered to focus on formerly developed story mountains and putting events in sequential order before beginning drafts. Students practiced taking apart a short story and putting the parts into a story mountain and then building their own story mountains for their story ideas. The Historical Fiction assessment revealed that students were not able to keep track of time in historical fiction books as it relates to historical setting and a personal setting. As a result, teaching points were altered. In addition, students were taught to use timelines, one for tracking historical events and the other for tracking of personal events. Students then used timelines to understand how the historical events may have shaped their lives.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development  
Rating: Proficient

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact
The inquiry-based professional collaborations have strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers. Teacher teams' analyses of student data typically result in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence
- The school team structures include inquiry teams and a data analysis and planning team. The data and analysis team meets to plan instruction with student work analysis as a tool to guide the planning process. The weekly inquiry teams conduct cycles of inquiry. As a part of the process, a presenting teacher shares a question and intervention, the focus group observes data and takes notes, teachers go through two rounds of things they have noticed based on student work presented, one round of wonderings, and the presenting teacher shares what she is planning to do next with instruction as part of the action planning phase.

- The inquiry meeting observed included grade 1 teachers, a special education teacher and a reading specialist. Teachers were looking at running records data. A teacher presented student data that indicated challenges with accuracy, patterns with phrasing and fluency. Some things that were noticed by the team were: phrasing is stronger at the end of text, and in level ten text, four to five word phrases were stronger in accuracy. Next instructional steps captured on the teacher inquiry planning document included use of the finger scooping technique, and placing fingers from left to right of text in an effort to have student read faster. Review of additional action planning documents shows a student struggling with decoding unfamiliar words will have word work built into their guided reading as the next instructional step.

- The teachers shared that the teacher team structures help them to better assess what students need and think of a plan of action. It also helps them to build on the strategies used as interventions. Teachers are able to better hone in on particular skill deficits and re-teach as necessary, which was evidenced in small group re-teach activities. Teachers monitor and track progress for groups of students. For example, a reading progress tracking document indicates from week one to nine, the student moved from a level four to level 10. A weekly record of writing and vocabulary shows a student went from a score of 22 to 47. Also, a review of a tracking document shows approximately 30% of the students who had been performing at level two, based on grade 5 ELA data, are now performing at level three.