

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Flushing Manor

Elementary School Q184

**163-15 21 Road
Queens
NY 11357**

Principal: Anna Dimilta

**Dates of review: March 30, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Danielle DiMango**

The School Context

Flushing Manor is an elementary school with 518 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 13% Hispanic, 50% White, 35% Asian, and 1% Multi-Racial students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-15 was 95.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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.	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Focus	Proficient
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.	Additional Findings	Well Developed

School Culture

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations.	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Systems for Improvement

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning.	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school has successfully aligned curricula and tasks to best meet the needs of all students and to address the rigorous demands of the Common Core Learning Standards. Student data guides teacher teams with detailed information and drives teacher's decisions in making adjustments to move students forward in their learning.

Impact

As a result of curricular decisions, students are exposed to rigorous curricula, across grades and content areas that address the instructional shifts and provides them access to real life situations to promote college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across grades are using Words for Life within all content area curriculum maps to explicitly connect vocabulary to content units. In a first grade teacher plan, students are responsible for displaying sentences that contain content specific and multiple meaning words around the classroom and in fifth grade, advanced vocabulary words are referred to as "expensive" words and students align the use of these words within their work to future success in college and careers.
- As part of a school wide goal of supporting 21st century learning, curriculum maps include technology entry points for all learners including supports for English language learners and extensions for advanced students. Programs such as RAZ kids, I-Ready, as well as websites within learning center time, support skills and content addressed across all curriculum areas.
- Teachers engage in math curriculum mapping using the Go Math program as a base and infuse other resources such as Engage New York to better meet the specific needs of their students. All maps and units include standardized expectations such as content strands, key standards, essential questions, skill focus, activities and tasks, entry points and enrichment, key vocabulary established through the Words for Life initiative and a technology component. Units scaffold across grades to include deeper expectations of standards within each topic. For example, a kindergarten unit that focuses on numbers and operations in base ten, scaffolds from counting and grouping of numbers and understanding place value to drawing concrete models and solving and explaining two digit word problems in first grade. Activities and vocabulary also scaffold to provide students with a starting point and then progress in complexity to move their learning along the continuum of the standards. Additionally as part of this work, teachers engage in multi-level task design tiered to provide entry and address the needs of all learners, such as increased focus on vocabulary and tools such as sentence starters, picture cues and thinking maps in all content areas to allow students to organize their thoughts and gain understanding of their work in order to complete on grade level tasks. For example, fourth grade teachers designed tasks within the report of information unit of study to include graphic organizers and thinking maps that allowed learners deeper access and better organization of content.
- Teachers build and enhance units of study through diary mapping throughout the year to allow them to reflect on their curriculum choices, task design and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. Analysis of pre and post unit student work is part of this process and teachers organize data by student performance within key standards. As a result of this curriculum design process, teachers saw the need to infuse more real world tasks into the units of study to support college and career readiness and to provide enrichment for higher achievers. For example, as part of a science writing unit on inventions, students are now asked to write a proposal modeled after the show "Shark Tank", where they need to design an invention, write a business plan and present their proposal to an audience. Additionally, students read "*Lunch Money*" from the Ready Gen unit. Teachers infused non-fiction articles that addressed business and the economy.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school's well-aligned instructional focus provides challenging opportunities for students to engage in project-based learning opportunities that are inclusive and meet all students at their level of learning. However, some teachers struggle with teaching strategies that promote rigor and challenge for some students.

Impact

The principal and staff plan strategically to ensure practices are aligned to the demands of the curricula and that all students have opportunities to engage in challenging tasks that stretch their thinking. However, in some classrooms discussions were not framed to provide students with opportunities to question and support each other's thinking limiting full ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The school-wide instructional focus centers on creating authentic, real world classroom experiences in all curriculum areas. For example, when reading "*The Tarantula Scientist*" by Sy Montgomery, teachers planned for students to skype with the author. They had opportunities to ask questions connected to their learning, such as including imagery and voice when writing, and discussed with the author how she is able to present scientific information to students. Students also wrote letters to the French government asking them to stop using tarantulas as souvenirs and highlighted the ways they benefit the environment and the world of medicine. A fifth grade math class was given a budget of fifteen thousand dollars to plan a trip for their grade and in studying the work of Rachael Carson, students designed brochures around saving the environment. One student's work reviewed during the student meeting, was a brochure for a residential development company that built homes in Florida ensuring that manatee habitats were protected.
- In order to provide entry, access and enrichment for all learners, teachers in some grades have implemented station teaching. Additionally, the school has programmed cross grade reading blocks called "book clubs" where students are grouped by Fountas and Pinnell reading levels. In one third grade math class, students were working in groups to solve word problems with equivalent fractions. Tasks were tiered and scaffolded with teacher supports in some stations. Students were required to use pictures, words and numbers to solve problems and to check their work against the problem solving rubric. When observing a second grade book club, students had clear and specific group roles and were asked to make predictions within a chapter and complete a thinking map about a character.
- Teachers work together to closely plan entry points to support the needs of English language and struggling learners through planning and implementation of the parallel teaching model in many classrooms in order to target specific needs of students. In one first grade classroom observed, teachers were engaged in a parallel teaching model in a math lesson centered on drawing models to add tens. Both teachers went over the same content, strategies and computation problems and scaffolded the lesson at different times to expose students to word problems with appropriate supports, such as white boards and manipulatives.
- Although teachers within and across grades are planning to incorporate the instructional shifts and key Common Core Learning Standards and there is a consistent belief that students learn best through a variety of opportunities to explore real world problems, in some classes, teachers struggled with high level questioning and task design necessary to bring high levels of rigor. For example, in one kindergarten class, students were working on an editing activity, where although grade appropriate, many students knew how to complete the task and had tackled the skills very quickly. In other classrooms where station teaching was present, teacher planning of questions for students to consider often led to one pathway of answers discouraging deeper student thinking and ownership of their learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school has created a variety of systems and checkpoints to ensure that curricula and assessments stay relevant and effectively serve the needs of students.

Impact

These consistent assessment tools serve as a guide for teachers and students to measure the impact of learning outcomes, leading to strategic adjustments to the instructional core and student understanding of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- As part of curricular design, multiple assessment tools are used to plan and program instruction and to measure student progress across content areas. Each grade level has key assessments that they use to target student growth. They include Fountas and Pinnell reading levels three times per year, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), performance tasks, Ready Gen end of unit benchmarks, rubric based writing tasks, I-READY performance, Go Math pre, post and midline assessments as well as progress quick checks. Data from these tools are used for student goal setting and appropriate grouping, by grade level teams to monitor and revise units and daily plans, during individual conferences with teachers and to benchmark school wide goals. Currently teacher teams are carefully monitoring how English language learners are performing within the expectations of these assessments and are infusing key skills and strategies into curriculum maps, such as speaking and listening and language expectations to meet the specific needs of these students.
- The administration, teachers and the school leadership team developed and implemented a more comprehensive grading policy and report card grading scale. As many students fall within levels three and four, teachers and parents felt they needed more clarity around ways teachers are tracking and communicating student progress. As a result, the school grading system includes a “G” range that measures student growth within the level three rating scale. This system, aligned with individualized teacher comments, helps parents to better understand their child’s progress within the range of meeting standards, with clear targets of support to help prepare them for the next level.
- Across all classrooms visited, students used rubrics and checklists aligned to specific expectations within tasks that guided their learning. There was clear evidence that rubrics were modified based on student data and included areas of focus. For example, math problem solving rubrics are used within grade bands and scaffold from drawing models and creating number sentences in the early grades to providing reasoning and proof and representations of work in the upper grade bands. Additionally, in one classroom visited, students were using an informative/explanatory writing rubric as part of a Ready Gen unit of study. Adjustments from the programs rubric included additional target areas such as use of details, words for life vocabulary and a focus on clarity to better inform the reader.
- Within classrooms and on student work displayed throughout the school, there is a culture of student self- assessment and peer feedback that supports student learning. During discussions and review of student work, students were able to clearly identify how they used assessment tools to monitor and revise their work. They were also able to demonstrate rubric aligned feedback provided by their peers in order to allow them to be more reflective and persistent around improving their work products. Additionally, in one math class visited, students were working in groups on a math task that required them to multiply and divide fractions. The class then engaged in a gallery walk where they had opportunities to offer relevant rubric aligned feedback to their peers. Examples included, “show your work using strategies before drawing your model to explain your thinking”. Finally, all teachers engage in practices such as exit slips and assessment questions to use as checkpoints during station teaching and lesson checklists to assess student unit progress.

Quality Indicator:

3.4 High Expectations

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The school has a strong culture of communicating high expectations to staff, students and their families that ensures a clear understanding of pedagogical practice and steps to support student achievement.

Impact

There is a strong commitment throughout the school community to support and model rigor and college and career readiness skills leading to a culture of continuous learning for adults and students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal and staff have established a culture of professional goal setting at the beginning of each school year centered around the Danielson Framework for Teaching, in order to support teacher progression within the high expectations set for the school. Teachers review student data, grade level standard expectations, and the school wide focus and then collaborate with the principal to develop goals and action plans to support their growth. Professional learning opportunities are developed by the professional development committee and are tiered based on these plans. This system is benchmarked mid-year where teachers are asked to self-assess and discuss progress towards goals and the impact that working on this goal, has had on student outcomes. The principal then adjusts professional development plans and provides additional resources based on teacher need.
- The principal has worked with staff and parents to design a comprehensive website that details monthly units of study, school goals, individual class assignments, messages from teachers and progress on school wide initiatives, such as words for life tasks and thinking maps. There are also parent friendly resources aligned to monthly topics for parents to use at home to support their children. This website also allows for constant communication through emails between staff and families. Data shows that there have been over five thousand hits on this school website this year. For those families that do not have access to computers, parents state that teachers are always available to meet with them upon request and get back to parents within twenty four hours if there is a phone call or letter sent.
- In addition to quarterly report cards, parents receive progress reports that detail student progress within units of study. All reports highlight strengths and offer next steps in literacy, math, other content areas, work habits and social development.
- Throughout the school there is a culture of student goal setting for every unit of study across all content areas. There is reciprocal feedback between teachers and students and students and their peers using rubric based comments on student work products to support student thinking and editing along the way. An example of this type of feedback system was evident on a student's reading goal which focused on chunking text to build comprehension skills. Teacher comments asked the student to identify strategies she could use to help organize her thinking. The student responded in writing "I can use a multi-flow map to help me think about cause and effect in the text".

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Teacher teams have developed a full understanding of inquiry-based professional learning and are better able to collaborate on instructional practices that will support the specific needs of students they share. The school culture supports distributive leadership opportunities where teachers engage in teacher-led professional learning opportunities throughout the school.

Impact

Systematic analysis of student work aligned to structures that ensure alignment of standards to student learning is resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and improvements in pedagogy and work products. There is trust among teachers resulting in a sharing of best practices throughout the school which impacts student learning outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- During a fifth grade meeting observed, teachers were analyzing the impact of pedagogical approaches they made to support students struggling with analysis of poetry. As a group, teachers focused on close reading and inserted critical thinking questions next to stanzas to get students to analyze and think about poetry through chunking. They also developed a two column note-taking graphic organizer that allowed students to pull examples from poems and infer meaning from certain lines to get a deeper understanding of theme. Teachers stated that these common practices have improved students' ability to analyze poetic devices and determine theme of poems by 60% as compared to an analysis of pre assessment data.
- During a second grade team meeting, teachers were engaged in a text rendering experience using protocols to analyze professional readings focusing on teaching students to use textual evidence to support their inferences when writing. Teachers pulled key points from the articles such as explicit and implicit elements of texts and discussed how their students define and describe inferences. Teachers then looked at student work products using this lens and decided to use textual evidence sentence starters such as, "in the text it said..." and "I know because...", to support students with this skill.
- The school's culture has inquiry work structured in cycles and teams write summaries of their work, which they then share with their colleagues. For example, a third grade cycle of inquiry focused on using problem-solving rubrics to heighten the quality of student feedback and performance in problem-solving tasks. Teachers analyzed student work prior to implementing rubrics, made changes to instructional practice, such as mixed grouping and supporting targeted discussions using rubrics, tracked noticings around student use of this tool and student ability to provide feedback around their math thinking. This work led to school-wide use of problem solving rubrics that scaffold thinking across grades.
- Teachers state there are high levels of trust throughout the school where sharing of teacher practice is welcomed and supported. The culture is one of continuous professional learning as evidenced in the study groups formed from inquiry work that teachers design and participate in throughout the year. As part of the collaborative culture of distributive leadership and professional growth, these sessions are teacher run and include topics such as: math discussion and problem solving, hands on science, integrating technology in the classroom, reciprocal teaching and vocabulary development. This work is enhanced through a detailed inter-visitation schedule where teachers can freely visit their colleagues to observe best practices for implementation in their own classrooms.