



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. 032 The Gifford School

Elementary School R032

**32 Elverton Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10308**

Principal: Nancy Spataro-Bellocch

**Date of review: February 11, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

The School Context

P.S. 032 The Gifford School is an elementary school with 687 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 1% Black, 17% Hispanic, and 78% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 24% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.6%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</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	Additional Findings	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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	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	Focus	Proficient
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	Celebration	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school leaders consistently communicate and provide training on high expectations. Staff members effectively communicate the school's expectations for families to understand their children's progress.

Impact

Structures in place build a culture of mutual accountability for staff, and foster partnerships with parents that lead students to a path of college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration communicates the school's goals through memoranda, faculty conferences and professional development. In a December-January agenda memorandum, school leaders list bottom lines for instruction, environment and use of data. It states key standards teachers should focus on during classroom instruction, provides guidance on how to use data such as students practicing self-assessment, and encourages the use of professional self-reflection checklists for lesson planning which should be used three times a year.
- Teachers reported that they hold each other accountable for submission and presentation deadlines for cross planning and grade-level meetings. For each meeting, teachers are required to present a problem of practice and present work demonstrating how they have supported students and other lesson materials. In addition, observation debriefs are used as a form of holding teachers accountable for their professional goals and completing school self evaluation questionnaires. Teachers' reflections on these questionnaires include, "To help us as teachers self-reflect on our practices in order to implement best practices in our classrooms." Administrators support teachers by providing feedback and support for how teachers are meeting their own goals as well as the school's instructional focus. Feedback in the form of next steps includes, "When planning, consider: Why does this content matter? How is it relevant to the students and to the discipline?" to ensure that the activities match the success criteria as part of the instructional focus.
- Parents shared that the school communicates their children's progress and grade-level expectations through online tools, phone calls, letters, and tests sent home which are required to be reviewed and signed. The parent handbook provides details on the variety of programs, expectations for homework, grading policy, student self-reflection and Common Core Learning Standards. Parent workshops offer training for families to learn strategies and methods taught during the day in order to support their children at home. One parent stated that by attending a math workshop she learned about bar models and how to break down other concepts which has helped her child at home. Parents shared that they learned how to use *ThinkCentral* which is an online math and ELA tutoring tool to use at home to help their children. Another parent shared how the school website which contains assignments has helped her know what her child needs per day in order to provide support at home. Other parents agreed that these tools and workshops were helpful.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses rubrics, other assessments aligned to the curricula and ongoing checks for understanding along with self-assessment to determine student understanding.

Impact

Assessments and adjustments provide students with actionable feedback and meaningful insight leading to awareness of next steps for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses unit assessments and content specific rubrics which are aligned with the *Journeys* and *GO Math!* curricula. In addition, student reading levels are assessed using the *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP)*. Performance tasks assess student performance in social studies and science which are conducted throughout the year. This year teachers worked on the performance levels in assessments for math to match the grading policy. Teachers reported that since the rubrics cut off at Level 3, they decided develop criteria for Level 4 based on their review of the standards.
- During a meeting, students shared that based on rubrics scores and test percentages, they were able to determine how they performed. They stated that they “did good” because they got a Level 3 or an 80% on a test. However, student responses to feedback provided by teachers shared next steps but did not show full understanding of what the feedback meant or how they have internalized it. Examples of feedback with next steps included using a dictionary to help with spelling and rereading to avoid run on sentences. Students stated that they were able to use these strategies in other pieces, yet other responses were not as detailed in reflecting how they might have used their next steps.
- Across classrooms, teachers use one-to-one conferences, success criteria checklists for self-assessment and questioning to determine student understanding during lessons. In a grade 4 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math lesson, one teacher worked with a student to assist him with using a checklist for determining the relation between factors and multiples. The student was able to take the teacher’s advice and use it towards the problem he was attempting to solve. However, in another class, the use of a whole class thumbs up and down method was used to gauge students’ understanding, yet a clear, specific follow up with next steps for individuals or groups was not as clear or evident during the lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty utilize curricula, which is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and strategically integrates the instructional shifts and embeds rigor across grades and subject areas for all students.

Impact

School-wide curricula result in coherence and in rigorous tasks which allow students to demonstrate their thinking and promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *Journeys* for ELA and *GO Math!* and *Exemplars* for math. The school supplements their ELA curriculum with other programs such as *Junior Great Books*, *Learning A-Z* and *Engage NY* tasks. In science, the school implements a *Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)* curricula from kindergarten through fifth grade. The teacher created social studies curricula consisting of the use of supplementary materials with themes aligned to the city-wide scope and sequence and ELA curricula. All curricula are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards.
- Based on a data review, the school has decided to focus on particular instructional shifts and target standards which is evident in the curricula. A review of lesson plans across grades shows focus on character traits, which was deemed an area of improvement for the school. Other shifts are also evident in lesson plans such as citing evidence. In a grade 3 social studies lesson plan, the task criteria require students to formulate an opinion about a character's trait and support it with 2 pieces of text evidence. In a grade 5 ELA lesson plan, the task requires students to analyze the traits for the main and secondary characters and use text evidence to support their rationale for choosing the trait. In math, the task exposes students to real world application and problem solving where they are determining how to fit 32 guests comfortably in a room by applying their knowledge of area and perimeter.
- Tasks include activities which are aligned to Levels 3 on the Depth of Knowledge (DoK) matrix. For one grade 4 ELA task, students are to conduct a short investigative research project on a scientist who made a difference in the world and write an informative account of the subject. All math tasks require students to show multiple ways to show their work and explain their thinking. In a grade 3 social studies task, students are required to use a text, *Ooka and The Honest Thief*, to provide reasons whether or not it's okay to steal food for your family using text evidence to support their rationale.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The use of teacher strategies and scaffolds serve as multiple entry points into appropriately challenging tasks and allow students to engage at high levels.

Impact

Teacher pedagogy and tasks lead students to demonstrate high order thinking and high levels of participation in discussions and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade 5 self-contained ELA lesson, students were asked to use a text to analyze two characters actions, words and thoughts using the book, *Old Yeller*. Students were provided with different graphic organizers to jot down their thoughts and the characters' traits. The teacher guided students through the organizers using prompts such as, "Use the words and images to help determine his actions." Students were able to make inferences by saying, "Travis was brave because he wanted his mom to run in order to save Arliss' life." Another student stated, "Travis didn't want his brother to be scared and knew that the big bear could bite him."
- In a science class, students engaged in group work to determine whether a set of materials are conductors or insulators. Students tested each of the materials and recorded their responses on a table. Each group discussed their noticings and many students were able to determine that the conductors were all metal. After, they worked on developing a name for the group of insulators. Students assisted each other by sharing how some attributes were prevalent in both the conductor and insulator group in order to develop a name for the group.
- In a grade 4 ICT math lesson, students engaged in group work via stations to develop strategies to identify factors, to determine multiples and to solve word problems. Students used different strategies such as Circle, Underline, Boxes, Evaluate and Solve-Check (CUBES), number lines, and patterns to solve the given problems. Each group member contributed to the group's answers based on the station task.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations aligned to the school’s goals and Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive structures, which build leadership capacity, are in place.

Impact

Team decisions strengthen instructional capacity, and teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet twice weekly to engage in professional inquiry using student work in ELA and math. One team meeting is a grade-level meeting where teachers share strategies based on problems of practice and theories of action.. The other meeting consists of cross-grade planning where teachers share practices and the results of their inquiry work. Teams use a tuning protocol where they provide warm and cool feedback to the presenting teacher based on student responses to tasks and strategies used. Teachers reported that they have benefited especially from cross planning meetings as they have used and adapted strategies from their colleagues in different grades. One teacher stated she used a color coded ring for self-assessment developed by a grade 1 teacher for one of her non- verbal students who showed difficulty with the concept.
- During a grade 4 meeting, a teacher presented charts from a math task where students had difficulty showing their remainder in the form of a fraction. The problem presented was, “How do I get my students to be able to interpret a remainder as a fraction or a decimal?” The teacher shared previous lesson strategies, class background and criteria for the task. The grade-level teachers reviewed the work and provided warm and cool feedback to the presenting teacher. Some strategies shared included ensuring students are using CUBES strategy effectively and adding the term “key words” to another strategy. The presenting teacher chose 2 methods from the list of strategies to implement. Teachers reported that this method of sharing ideas helps with their teaching practices.
- The Core Instructional Team contains teachers from each grade and a special education teacher. Members of this team reported that they assisted in the selection of the new ELA curricula, *Journeys*. Teachers reported that the program they used last year, *ReadyGen*, did not engage students fully and writing wasn’t a strong element in the problem. In addition, the current program contained features which mirrored the school’s use of the workshop model and provides materials for tiered activities. In addition, the Core Instructional Team provides professional development for implementing the school’s focus on self-directed learning using success criteria. The team took a lead in making sure the criteria were aligned to the standards and teachers were using them consistently across the school.