



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Lyons Community School

High School 14K586

223 Graham Ave.

Brooklyn

NY 11206

Principal: Taeko Onishi

Dates of review: March 19 – 20, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Lyons Community School is a middle/high school with 546 students from 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 41% Black, 55% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 84.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school community works to sustain a safe and inclusive culture, which promotes students social-emotional growth resulting in an environment where student voice is valued. (1.4)
 - Second chances and inclusiveness guide many of the practices and systems in place to sustain a culture for learning at the school. Both parents and students spoke of the school as a safe environment. Restorative practices such as the Justice Panel allow students to assist in determining how those who do not live up to certain behavioral expectations repay the community. Purposefully, many of the trained students who can be called to serve on the panel once stood before it. “*Circles*” work to establish a structured means for discussing topics that range from check-ins to serious issues that impact members of the school community. The process trains students to be active listeners in an equitable environment. *Circles* also serve as a format for interventions when support staff and teachers wish to intervene with specific students. Students spoke of how trained peer mediators work to facilitate solutions to conflicts amongst their peers. Furthermore, the Student Council is empowered to initiate improvements for the school’s community. For example, when students became frustrated with the state of the bathrooms as well as their access to them, the Student Council pushed for policies that eventually resulted in establishing designated times for access and posting staff near the bathroom to deter students from misusing them. The five school deans are crucial supports in the school community as they prioritize establishing meaningful relationships with students that are leveraged when guiding them to make better choices. Through conferencing, ongoing check-ins and communicating with staff via the email, “Daily Run Down”, deans focus most of their efforts on those who are most at-risk of undermining their purpose for being in school. The school’s two guidance counselors facilitate State mandated counseling; provide direct support to teachers with targeted high needs students, and work to find off-site supports for students and families that need them. An attendance committee regularly reviews attendance reports, targets students who struggle with coming to school, and devise interventions such as incentives and/or having advisors call home. Teachers have taken on the role of using detention to hold students accountable for lateness and homework completion. The cumulative impact of the school’s cultural practices are reflected in a decrease in suspensions and lateness to class, as well as an increase in middle school students motivated to matriculate to the high school in order to serve on Student Council, the Justice Panel and as a peer mediator.
- Structures are in place that provide teachers with a voice in decision-making that impacts school practices, as well as engage in regular professional collaborations that result in increased instructional capacity. (4.2)
 - The sixth grade inquiry team was observed looking at a targeted student’s writing sample with a focus on the ability to support a claim. The protocol asked team members to consider: what the student did well, what the student needs to improve, and next instructional steps. One teacher

stated, “She doesn’t reference titles which makes it hard for the reader to follow,” as well as the likelihood that the student did not understand the meaning of the word “account” which was found in the prompt. The teams analysis of the piece highlighted that though the student successfully cited evidence from the text, her inability to understand the prompt resulted in her not effectively using text evidence to support her claim. There was a collective agreement that they all needed to be mindful of ensuring that students comprehend the prompt. Instructional strategies such as teaching the meaning of academic vocabulary frequently found in writing prompts were shared and all teachers, not just the one who brought student work, committed to implement the strategies and report back in a subsequent meeting on their effectiveness. All grades have grade teams which engage in such student output informed practices resulting in improved instruction across grades and subject areas.

- Teachers and school leaders noted that although all teachers are invited to weekly Management meetings where all of the school’s significant policies are developed, designated representatives are assigned from each grade team to ensure effective lines of communication and accountability. Everything from School Based Option topics to establishing a detention system designed to impact student academic behaviors are discussed in these meetings. Additionally, teachers play an integral part in ongoing decisions that impact how the school prepares for application to the New York State Performance Standards Consortium, as they drive the development of performance tasks that will be used to assess student mastery of skills and content. As a result of the purposeful inclusivity that exists within the professional culture, all teachers are positioned to have roles in determining how teaching and learning occur across the school.
- Standards-aligned curricula are designed to provide students with access to challenging tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills that result in college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - The majority of curricula reviewed showed a deepening commitment to the integration of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and/or New York State content standards as well as instructional shifts. Specifically, numerous subject areas including science, art, social studies and English language arts had planning documents that coherently leveraged annotation as a skill to isolate key text needed to support a claim. Lesson plans also showed that the majority of instruction emphasized rigorous tasks that promote higher order skills. For example, a studio art unit plan revealed that students would have to select from dozens of pieces created in the class to curate an exhibition. The curating teams would come up with a theme for the exhibition and write an essay where they would use evidence from the artwork to validate why pieces were chosen and what they have in common. An eleventh grade Integrated Co-Teaching, English language arts lesson plan showed how students would explore written text to uncover the sub-text that lies within it. Such tasks, which promote student thinking, were found in the curricula across grades and subject areas resulting in all students having access to challenging learning experiences that promote college and career readiness.

- School leadership provides teachers with ongoing feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework consisting of actionable next steps that promote professional growth. (4.1)
 - The beginning of the school year marked the initiation of a concentrated effort on the part of school leadership to get into classrooms and support instruction. Prioritizing teachers that were either new to the school or new to the professional, the principal, assistant principal and co-director conducted walk-throughs, visiting teachers three to four times per week, and face-to-face debriefs with teachers once per week for the first five to seven weeks of term one. In addition, thorough low inference narratives were provided for select teachers during the first four weeks. Danielson aligned feedback commenced in October, which provided time in September for the school to acclimate new teachers to the framework. As a result of this purposeful supportive push, the leadership team has conducted over 450 observations thus far. In commenting on feedback provided after an observation, a teacher stated, “I get very actionable feedback. She gives me strategies. Her feedback was like, ‘It’s good that their writing essays, but how do you get them to be more independent?’ Then she suggested a protocol that students can follow during their writing process.” A review of observation reports revealed next steps for improvement such as, “Doing the ‘not after but. . .’ way of prompting, doesn't actually get them to use the context clues. Next time, try to have in your head the exact way you'll get at the meaning if a student doesn't know the word ahead of time.” Student data via scholarship reports are reviewed in quarterly one-on-one conferences with each teacher. Guiding questions for those conversations include: Are there any surprises, and what are you doing about it? Such instructional feedback practices articulate clear expectations resulting in professional growth and reflection.

What the school needs to improve

- Support teachers in implementing multiple entry points into the curricula across classrooms so that all students are engaged in high levels of thinking and participation thus producing rigorous work products. (1.2)
 - The majority of teachers purposefully provided students with different ways of meeting the intended learning objectives. For example, after reviewing the rules of annotation, a middle school social studies teacher grouped students heterogeneously by reading level; two stronger readers with two struggling readers. Struggling readers were provided with graphic organizers and leveled text that had questions embedded in them, while the stronger readers were given appropriately leveled text and no additional supports. Also, in a co-taught English language arts lesson, teachers modeled the skill, provided a t-chart to capture thinking and assigned accessible text. However, in a high school social studies class, which contained a number of special education students, the task required that students elaborate in an essay by strategically adding key details from different sources, yet they were not provided with any scaffolds or supports to effectively do the assignment. In an Integrated Co-Teaching geometry class, students were to consistently make the distinction between adjacent and opposite angles. Some students were able to do so readily, but approximately half of the class exhibited varying levels of confusion. There were no supports in place to assist them during instruction. The inconsistent implementation of varying entry points

across classrooms results in uneven engagement in challenging tasks among students as evident in student work products.

- Although most teachers implemented pedagogical strategies intended to promote student thinking and participation, in some cases students were not able to fully meet these expectations. In a middle school math class, the teacher attempted to cognitively engage students with prompts such as, “I want to know what you think about this. Does anyone have a comment or question?” “Which method do you like better and why?” Yet the majority of students were unresponsive and either unwilling or unable to articulate their thinking. While circulating during a high school science lab experiment, some students were not clear on what they were expected to do. Others understood the task when stating, “We’re making observations of chemical reactions and seeing if we can reverse the process,” yet they could not articulate why this was worth doing or knowing. Also, the majority of students asked were not able to explain the meaning of key words such as ‘oscillation’ and ‘dynamic equilibrium’. Such unevenness in student discussions and work products prevents consistency in high levels of student thinking and participation across classrooms.
- Increase common assessment practices so that results are used to make curricula adjustments and provide meaningful feedback to students and teachers. (2.2)
 - Based on previously received feedback, the school has put concerted effort into developing its assessment practices. As a result, all grade inquiry teams have been charged with using English language arts Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data to inform the instruction of writing standard one across the curricula. Inquiry teams analyze student work in relation to the MOSL rubric to assess patterns of performance and inform curricular and instructional adjustments. For example, the focus on annotation came from data, which revealed that students had difficulty identifying details from text to support arguments and claims. Although this MOSL based work meaningfully informs writing instruction across grades and subject areas, the school is still in the process establishing other subject specific common assessments. In addition to the MOSL rubric, teachers utilize other rubrics, which provide students with feedback on how to improve their work. When asked how they might improve on an assignment, students mentioned, “I would add more evidence,” and “I need to organize my essay better. I didn’t write things in the right order.” The majority of students offered that having the rubrics clarified how they are doing and how they could improve. However, a student noted that although he understood that the rubric was telling him that he needed to improve in elaboration, he was not clear on how he could improve his piece so that his position was not merely explained (Level 2), but that it was thoroughly explained (Level 4). In addition, another student who fully understood a rubric said that if she had seen it before doing the project, she would have gotten a higher grade. However, it was only shared afterward as a form of feedback. Such student responses highlight the need to deepen the use of rubrics so that students across the vast majority of classrooms receive meaningful and actionable information regarding their achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Lyons Community School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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?			X				
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?		X					
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?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed