



Quality Review Report

2013-2014

P.S. X015 Institute for Environmental Learning

**Elementary/Middle School
10X015**

**2195 Andrews Avenue
BRONX
NY 10453**

Principal: Tara Edmonds

**Dates of review: November 12-13, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

P.S. X015 Institute for Environmental Learning is a K-8 school with 548 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 14% Black, 85% Hispanic, 0% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 95.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- A shared responsibility for student improvement emphasizes social-emotional learning and positive behaviors that permeates the entire school community results in a trusting and positive school culture. (1.4)
 - PS 15 is a safe and inclusive school community confirmed in meetings with parents, staff, students and administration. It is a choice school where parents are able to apply opt-in to attending through a lottery process. Many of the parents also attended the school and stated that this was “the only school” for their child. Students remain connected long after they leave. Commencement addresses are delivered by former graduates. The school works in partnership with Good Shepherd Services to provide after-school programs, counseling, and college and career readiness through internship programs. Ongoing events, communication and the effort put into building relationships creates a school community where every child strongly states that their needs are being met. Several students and parents speak of the immediate communal support they received when their family faced a crisis. All spoke about how the community cares for them on a daily basis. Students speak of the importance of being role models for younger students, modeling academic and personal behaviors that has resulted in a 50% reduction in as per the review of the Online Occurrence Reports.(b)
 - School staff uses school-wide system support forms to track in-school occurrences. Based on this data staff has put interventions in place in high occurrence areas, such as student mediators in the lunch room. Team building activities, Respect for All tenants, and the newly implemented positive behavior intervention system (PBIS) program ensure staff is aware of and trained in a cohesive proactive and positive approach to addressing student behaviors. Across classrooms behavioral expectations are evident. Students in need are discussed at pupil personnel team meetings that are attended by a full support team that includes administration, psychologist, social workers, service providers, classroom teachers and parents. This collaboration has resulted in the creation of intervention plans that identify each person's role in supporting specific students and expands teacher resources in addressing academic and personal needs. Additionally, the school implements Aiming High, a program that fosters etiquette, debate, and college readiness skills through a counseling experience. Upper grade students expressed repeatedly an obligation to be role models to lower grade students and noted their role is supporting students in meditation and as academic partners.
- A shared commitment to cultivate partnerships with families and community systemically supports all students in progress towards higher levels of student achievement. (3.4)
 - School leaders communicate high expectations for staff around instructional practice by establishing bottom lines for instruction. Focus areas are selected through the Danielson Framework for Teaching and an analysis of previous cycles of classroom visits. The school has been engaged in this work as a teacher effectiveness pilot school. Using Engage NY resources, from the Department of Education (DOE) at team meetings and reviewing cycles of observations with formative feedback, all staff now share a common understanding of the framework. Initially the foci centered around the learning environment, then shifted to planning and preparation and instruction. The present focus is 3c, engaging students in instruction. Staff regularly receives

professional development around these components. Teachers then put learning into practice and the instructional team, comprised of administration and coaching staff "inspects what they expect" through regular classroom visits. This has resulted in 100% of teachers now demonstrating a clear understanding of pedagogical expectations, as well as holding themselves accountable for reaching them.

- There is consistent communication between school and home through curriculum sessions, parent workshops and parent meetings held monthly and Teacher Ease, an online data management system that provides students and parents with real time data on students classwork, homework and assessments. In addition, it allows for email communication between families and teachers. These structures ensure that parents have the needed resources and are able to support their children's academic endeavors through open and transparent reporting of student performance. As a result, an increased number of students are being admitted to specialized high schools and earning regents credits prior to admissions.
- The school regularly analyzes common assessments at identified check points to adjust curricula and instructional practices leading to improved student achievement (2.2)
 - Benchmark assessments are used in English language arts (ELA) and math through the school's Measures of Student Learning selections and within the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curriculum. In teams, teachers review student data and make adjustments to curricula and practice based on these reviews. Teachers use information from the item skills analysis to identify areas for reteach and to create student groups, enabling them to provide more targeted instruction. For example, the school uses Teacher's College running records as a common assessment school wide to track and monitor reading progress. Benchmark assessments lead to item analysis by which teachers develop a comprehensive picture of student performance, enabling them to modify instruction and establish learning targets to meet the needs of all students.
 - Teacher teams meet two periods a week in addition to weekly inquiry team meetings and faculty conferences which are designed for professional development around school goals. Teachers review student work against CCLS aligned rubrics. Teachers review curricula and tasks against the CCLS and Instructional shifts resulting in increasing alignment and engagement. Teachers use checks for understanding daily. This includes the use questioning and observational data to modify and support instruction. Lesson plans consistently include guiding questions and active engagement. As a result, teachers are able to make immediate adjustments to instruction to ensure that the learning needs of students are met.
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the learning environment, then shifted to planning and preparation and instruction. The present focus is 3c, engaging students in instruction. Staff regularly receives professional development around these components. Teachers then put learning into practice and the instructional team, comprised of administration and coaching staff "inspects what they expect" through regular classroom visits. The shared responsibility towards achievement of school goals was evidenced in the teacher team meetings which were teacher led and grounded in the Danielson Framework. Additionally, questioning and discussion opportunities are evidenced in teachers lesson plans and administrative observational data shows improved teacher practice as a result.

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- School-wide structures support teacher teams and create leadership opportunities ensuring a collective responsibility and shared decision making process. (4.2)
 - Two periods of weekly teacher team meetings, in addition to extended day inquiry, preparation periods and faculty conferences are embedded within the school schedule. This common time is used among staff and administration to engage in conversations around instructional shifts within the CCLS, data analysis and professional practice through the lens of the Danielson Framework. This structured approach has increased awareness and implementation around school goals. For example, one teacher team meeting focused on looking at student work on a CCLS mathematics task from Engage NY along with the standardized rubric to determine next steps for classes and individual students. A second teacher team meeting focused on strategies to increase student engagement in alignment with the school's current focus on 3C. These practices have improved teacher instructional quality as noted in principal observation summary data.
 - Common meeting times have evolved from being guided by administration to coaches and lead teachers serving as primary facilitators. The use of observational and performance data sets agendas directly related to modifications to curriculum and instruction. All staff contribute and lead team meetings around pedagogical practice or analysis of student performance and progress. These opportunities have resulted in a common understanding of student learning needs and shared accountability for progress towards school goals. Thus, the item analysis of periodic assessments demonstrates increasing numbers of students progressing towards standards based goals.(

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to refine curricula and academic tasks to meet the needs of all learners in order to increase engagement and access to higher order thinking opportunities. (1.1)
 - The school has adopted Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula that includes CMP3 in English, Go Math!, Core Knowledge and Expeditionary Learning. The school is working to develop a shared

understanding of these new curricula in order to create consistently rigorous tasks with multiple entry points for all learners across grades and content. Special education and English as a second language teachers participate in planning sessions to discuss how best to meet the needs of all students. In some classes, teachers use generic scaffolds, such as chunking text or building common understanding through podcasts and shortened text before tackling more complex novels. However, lesson plans do not yet consistently reflect higher order questioning, engaging or tiered tasks to address the varied needs of students, including English language learners and students with disabilities. This prevents all student from engaging in learning activities and tasks that engage them in high levels of thinking in order to prepare them for the higher demands of high school, college or careers.

- Identify and include additional learning opportunities that increase multiple access points for various learners to increase participation and enable the production of higher level work products. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, students engage in varying tasks from the newly adopted curricula or Engage NY CCLS aligned tasks that range from supporting claims with textual evidence and deconstructing math word problems to "learning about" certain topics. Grade level learning targets are set within the curriculum, and checklist and rubrics support certain tasks and are primarily used to assess students final work products. However, not all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are consistently engaged in rigorous tasks across grades and content areas, and rubrics are not yet being used consistently to support students through the creation of work products. Additionally, targeted feedback is limited, thus preventing all students from using teacher feedback to increase their understanding and demonstrate higher levels of thinking in their work products.
 - Teacher teams meet regularly to review curriculum units and identify areas where they can build in extensions and scaffolds with the CCLS aligned curricula to increase student engagement and access to rigorous learning tasks. Coaches, special education teachers, general education teachers, ESL teachers all participate in these collaborative planning sessions in an effort to address CCLS in during planning and preparation sessions. Teachers state they are "still getting in the rythm" and the application of new curriculum varies from class to class. Discussions are primarily teacher directed, although attempts in several classrooms to have students build upon other student responses and increase engagement through turn and talk and questioning techniques were apparent. Thus, uneven levels of student to student discourse prevent all students from engaging in high levels of thinking and participation.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: P.S. X015 Institute for Environmental Learning	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly...	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

To what extent does the school...	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

To what extent does the school...	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
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