



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Lola Rodríguez de Tió**

**Middle School X162  
600 St. Ann's Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10455**

**Principal: Angel Fani**

**Dates of review: May 28 – 29, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Lola Rodríguez de Tió is a middle school with 410 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 30% Black, 69% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 31% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 86.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school has created a safe environment that supports the academic success and social emotional well-being of all students and adults. (1.4)
  - The first year principal reinforces a culture of respect focused on student success academically, socially and emotionally. Changing the mindset from an environment where individuals were functioning in a survival mode to a sense of community and collaboration in order to move this struggling school forward, is prevalent in his School Leadership Team (SLT) and faculty meetings and interactions with staff, students, and families. Students and staff embrace the School Character Pledge alongside the Pledge of Allegiance, as different students greet members of the school community during morning announcements that reinforce the positive behaviors and values being cultivated across the school. As soon as students finish the announcements, the principal ensures that he is there to thank students for stepping up to the task, thus reiterating the importance of the school motto: *“Student Success. Nothing Else.”* Staff, students and families see a difference in the school culture where students know and adhere to the behavior expectations set forth by the administration, resulting in a decrease in hallway incidents, as evidenced by data from the Online Occurrence Report System (OORS). As a result of the principal’s open door policy, students and staff feel comfortable to discuss concerns and/or ideas, for they know they are being heard. Some teachers have taken the initiative to hold grade-wide assemblies with students, on the importance of attendance and adherence to school-wide non-negotiables to ensure a safe, respectful and highly positive learning environment for all. Teachers volunteer their time as mentors, getting to know students well as they monitor student behavior, academic performance and engagement in their favorite clubs or teams. For example, the Leadership and Advisory programs provide students with opportunities to learn how to mediate conflicts and excel as leaders resulting in student awareness that these qualities will help their individual growth and future aspirations to achieve academic and personal goals.
- School leaders make organizational decisions strategically, resulting in effective allocation of resources to support school-wide instructional goals and students’ learning needs. (1.3)
  - In spite of operating with vacancies, the leadership has effectively aligned resources to meet the needs of students and teachers. In addition to ensuring compliance with the required instructional time in content subject areas, the principal provides opportunities for students to participate in music, arts and technology classes. Further, school-wide sustained silent periods were scheduled to afford students more time to focus on reading to increase their stamina, as teachers confer with them and provide feedback on an individual basis. This scheduled time has contributed to consistent communication between teachers and students, thus developing stronger student-teacher rapport, as teachers assess student growth and provide them with feedback for individual progress. After school and Saturday programs enhance students’ and parents’ learning in

language acquisition and content-specific skills. These academic interventions also assist struggling students with granular instructional support, in reading skills such as skimming and scanning. The partnerships with community based organizations, including Sports and Arts, align their efforts in support of school goals by providing students with homework help and extracurricular activities, such as arts and crafts, music, kickboxing and drama, resulting in academic and social emotional improvement, as evidenced by conversations with students and reviews of student work. Teachers' schedules are coordinated so that team meetings take place weekly with the guidance of the coach, focusing teachers on gap analysis of student work to identify next steps in teaching practices that lead to the improvement of student performance.

- Teachers consistently use data from common assessments to generate feedback to staff and students and inform adjustments to curricula and instruction for improved student outcomes. (2.2)
  - The use of interim assessments provides teachers with important data to address students' needs. Initially, the leadership, in consultation with teachers, decided on one specific day of the week where teachers would confer with students and immediately record the data outcomes online. This practice has resulted in teachers honing in on specific skills for students' academic success. In addition, running records and unit assessments from units of study assist teachers with important data that leads to student progress monitoring and targeted decisions for improved performance by individual students. As teachers analyze and discuss outcomes in their teams, they agree on instructional adjustments that meet students' needs. As a result of the data analysis, English language arts teachers engage students in Reciprocal Teaching strategies so that students can take ownership of their learning through meaningful discussions with peers. While students hold their roles with focused discussions, teachers ensure that learning targets are met, by formatively assessing students on an ongoing basis which, at times, results in pulling a strategy group to address individual student's immediate needs. Although the school-wide decision of engaging students in Reciprocal Teaching is a new concept, students have embraced it well by taking risks in providing feedback to their peers, as they assess each other's work and arguments, resulting in improved student outcomes in reading and writing.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that curricula aligned to content and Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are accessible to all learners across subject areas, for consistent cognitive engagement. (1.1)
  - The school uses CCLS-aligned curricula, *Scholastic Code X* and *Go Math!* to ensure that all students receive standards-based instruction to elevate teaching and learning school-wide. In addition, teacher teams have created and adjusted curricula that infuse the instructional shifts, such as student engagement in discussions and arguments on informational texts. In order to promote higher order thinking skills across all content areas, teachers use the Depth of Knowledge continuum to develop scaffolded questions in the units of study, exposing students to

questions that challenge them to deepen their discussions by referring back to the text for support. The interdisciplinary teacher team members bring their areas of expertise to the table, offering multiple ways to help students succeed academically. This professional learning community looks at curricula and discusses evidence of what is working and what to do about what is not working, to accelerate student learning. Having a representative of the varied content areas, inclusive of the arts and technology, allows the team to contribute ideas from their areas of expertise to promote instructional cohesion and coherence. For example, one of the decisions made by the team was to hone in on the curricula to ensure that there are evidentiary strategies to help students with disabilities and English language learners. As they researched this, one member brought to the table, the Reciprocal Teaching strategy which has been implemented school-wide and evidenced by student discussions in English language arts classes. However, the school is at the developing stage in ensuring that all learners are cognitively engaged in purposeful and meaningful tasks in content areas other than English language arts, resulting in a lack of consistent and coherent curricula that promote high levels of independent learning.

- Improve teacher pedagogy to consistently incorporate strategies that lead to higher levels of thinking and participation of all students in rigorous learning experiences across all content areas. (1.2)
  - With the high percentage of students with disabilities and English language learners, teachers are charged with the responsibility of connecting with the learning styles and multiple entry points of their students, to ensure that all students have access to education that enhances their learning, step by step, so that they can articulate their thinking and participate in activities and tasks with much understanding. Teachers use a variety of techniques such as manipulatives, graphic organizers, video presentations and peer work, which motivate students to take risks in discussions and engage in challenging tasks. Some student-led discussions afford students opportunities to assess the level of rigor of their questions and reflect on how they refine their work. Lesson objectives are phrased as “How can I...?” essential questions to challenge students’ thinking, as they engage in hands-on activities, group projects and discussions. For example, as students conduct surveys and compile the data, students work collaboratively to design their plans of action to reach an outcome. This process of student interaction leads to students learning how to reach consensus in order to finalize their projects. However, in spite of the CCLS-aligned essential questions, strategies and instructional visuals used to enhance student learning, teaching practices that promote higher order thinking across classrooms are inconsistent and lead to uneven levels of student engagement.
- Provide all teachers with consistent and effective feedback, using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, to ensure ongoing professional growth that results in positive teaching and learning outcomes. (4.1)
  - Building teacher knowledge of effective teaching practices is at the core of the leadership as administrators use the Danielson Framework for Teaching to provide teachers with feedback on competencies such as 3b, Using Questioning and Discussion techniques, and 3c, Engaging

Students in Learning. In order to identify the varying needs of teachers, early in the year administrators conducted informal observations and held initial individual conferences with teachers, which led to daily meetings with the coach to plan targeted professional development and ensure that teacher meetings focus on the analysis of student work for assessment of practices and that teachers agree on next steps for self-improvement. The administration created a “look fors” protocol on effective practices, in order to build teacher capacity and understanding of what effective teaching looks and sounds like, resulting in overall student academic improvement, as evidenced by meaningful student work products. The coach guides and assists teachers, including new teachers, in knowing their next steps for self-improvement, as evidenced by teacher team meetings, professional development sessions and one-on-one meetings. However, a review of observation records showed minimal evidence of the provision of consistent and rigorous feedback from administrators to all teachers, resulting in missed opportunities to accelerate teachers’ professional growth and reflection, school-wide.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: <b>Lola Rodríguez de Tió</b>	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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				
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>