



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Arturo Toscanini School

Elementary K216

**350 Avenue X
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Donna Neglia

**Date of review: March 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Isabel DiMola**

The School Context

The Arturo Toscanini School an elementary school with 647 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 16% Hispanic, 56% White, and 22% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 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	Proficient
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	Developing
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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Teachers engage in inquiry-based professional collaborations that support analysis of classroom practice and assessments, and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, embedding processes that allow teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practice.

Impact

The work of the teacher teams is resulting in growing school-wide instructional coherence, improving teacher practice and student progress, with distributed leadership structures that affect learning throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers across all grades collaboratively plan and design units of study and lesson plans that reflect alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Planning documents evidence opportunities for students to engage in challenging tasks. For example, a 4th grade unit of study in English language arts focuses students on “Exploring Impact and Effect”, providing for analysis of several informational texts with a culminating task that requires students to make a claim and support their point of view by citing text-based evidence.
- Inquiry teams use multiple sources of data including student work, Fountas and Pinnell reading level assessments and pre and post unit assessments in math and English language arts, to understand trends across the grades, classes and for individual students. Changes to curricula align to data as evidenced by the incorporation of guided reading practices to support progress in student literacy in response to data showing advancement in reading levels were not reaching predicted targets.
- Teacher leads collaborate with administrators in creating and implementing a professional development plan, receive support in building leadership and facilitative skills, and are emerging as leaders of the professional learning communities. As part of the instructional cabinet, they meet regularly with administration in a forum of discussion regarding instructional initiatives and monitoring of data to understand impact on teacher practice and student outcomes. As a result, teachers articulate that they feel they are valued and appreciate that they have voice in school-wide decision making including input on the purchase of texts and supplementary reading materials.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The use of strategic entry points to provide access to all learners that fosters deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

Impact

Across the school teachers provide multiple entry points inconsistently. As a result, some students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, do not have daily opportunities during lessons to tackle challenging and engaging tasks that enable them to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work.

Supporting Evidence

- Some lesson and unit plans list multiple entry points and scaffolds for students, although teachers do not always incorporate the strategies into their lessons. As such, students at differing levels are given the same access points to the work. As a result, some students were able to deeply engage with the material and reach or exceed standards, while others, such as students at or above level, were disengaged and others learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners, were frustrated and unable to make adequate progress. For example, during a 4th grade math lesson, student groups were working on the same problems toward forming equivalent fractions by multiplying the numerator and denominator by a number. Some students were actively engaging in the task, while others were confused by the task and did not understand the information being given to them by the teacher or paraprofessionals.
- A review of group work in several classrooms indicated that some students, including students with special needs, were not active participants in the task, and rather observed or disengaged while another group member did the bulk of the work. In many instances with the exception of reading level, scaffolds and differentiated materials were not used to ensure that all learners had appropriate access to the task.
- Some teachers use challenging questions to provide students with opportunities for rigorous engagement and to demonstrate higher order learning. For example, 5th grade student groups were researching a Latin American country and demonstrated their learning through individual reflection that required them to discuss a strategy they used, three things learned and an understanding or connection they made. However, in other classes, discourse was limited to a teacher-student cadence of discussion. Most often teachers provided students with information, thereby limiting opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking and productive struggle. During a 2nd grade lesson, as groups worked independently, a teacher worked with a guided group. After asking students to highlight important information on a particular page of the reading, the teacher proceeded to highlight the information for several students in the group.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards with units of study and tasks being planned and refined through the analysis of data and student work products.

Impact

The decision to purposefully focus on developing curricula that incorporates the instructional shifts and is building coherence across classrooms. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills that promote college and career readiness for all students are embedded in curricula.

Supporting Evidence

- Units of study across content areas integrate the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Planned activities require students to engage in multi-step problem solving, argumentative writing, text-based response, and content specific vocabulary. Units embed tasks and extension activities to push student thinking including more complex math problems and the incorporation of additional texts to support or create a claim. (a)
- Curricula articulates skill development at each grade level, clearly demonstrating the ladder of complexity, specific learning targets and academic and personal behaviors, such as responsibility, perseverance and organization in grade appropriate ways that are necessary in order for students to be on a path of college and career readiness. For example, a 4th grade unit of study in English language arts provides students with multiple opportunities to demonstrate standards mastery and allows for student choice in selecting tools, such as graphic organizers to support their learning.
- Planning is refined using data from student work and assessments including conference notes, on demand writing, exit slips, and formative and summative tasks. Teacher lesson plans evidence purposeful planning to engage all learners using a Universal by Design model of differentiation. These include flexible grouping, guided group activities, leveled readings, differentiated tasks and manipulatives, as well as incorporating technology and programs such as *Brain Pop*. . A 5th grade English language arts unit on “Understanding the Universe” included scaffolds for English language learners such as the use of sentence starters, peer conferencing, visuals and graphic organizers to assist students in deconstructing the text.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers across content areas use common assessments, rubrics, ongoing checks for understanding and track student progress, making adjustments to curricula based on their findings.

Impact

The school's systems that monitor progress by looking at student work, analyzing data and incorporating formative assessments during instruction inform adjustments in unit and lesson planning to meet the needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes common assessments across the school including student portfolios, Fountas and Pinnell reading assessments, conference notes and running records, pre and post assessments in mathematics, benchmark assessments, on demand writing. At regulated intervals during the school year, administrators analyze data through item analysis to measure student performance and progress along the standards by grade, class, sub-group, and for individual students.
- Rubrics are created that align to assessments and are used to provide clear expectations to students as well as to inform students of their level of performance with feedback providing clarity on how they can progress. Data from rubric aligned tasks as well as formative and summative assessments inform the teaching and learning cycle of assess, teach and adjust. For example, analysis of 5th grade fall benchmark data in English language arts revealed that students were deficient in their ability to identify theme and main idea. By identifying these gaps, teachers were able to adjust their units of study to ensure support for students in these areas. In addition, teachers were able to use this data to articulate their professional development and support needs, thereby connecting the data to their teaching practice.
- Across content areas, teachers use entry and exit slips, conferring and teacher and student checklists to assess student work and make adjustments throughout lessons. Throughout classrooms teachers use ongoing checks for understanding that include student turn and talks, medial summary questions, use of thumbs up/thumbs down and conferencing. As a result a majority of classrooms demonstrated adjustments being made that include grouping, student selection for guided groups, and use of various graphic organizers including Venn diagrams and T-charts. Students use rubrics and checklists to self-assess their work. In a 4th grade class, students used a rubric and checklist to self-assess their understanding of specific math skills. From their assessment, they were then able to choose which station they would work in to address their learning needs.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are communicated to the entire school community, including teachers, students, and families. Professional development, parent workshops, and teacher feedback place students on a path of college and career readiness.

Impact

Structures that support high expectations across all constituencies establish a culture of mutual accountability in school-family partnerships. Supports are in place for students' achievement of college and career ready skills and behaviors as well as among teachers for meeting school expectations around teaching and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Articulation of high expectations as well as professional development lies in the domains of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and includes data driven planning and purposeful pedagogic choices that make sense for students. Professional development focuses on purposeful planning, effective questioning and increasing student engagement and promoting discussion in classrooms. Feedback to teachers includes clear meaningful next steps resulting in improving teaching for most teachers. For example, to support a teacher in improving student engagement, feedback stated, "As a next step, please develop routines that can encourage all students to have an opportunity to explain their thinking and be part of the lesson. The school's professional development plan evidences specific workshops that address this need.
- Systems to communicate with families include e-mail, texting, newsletters, phone calls and written notes as well as report cards and progress reports. This provides parents with clear understanding of expectations and student progress. Parents explain that "the information provided by the school makes it clear to us what kids need to do. We always know how our children are doing and what they need to do better."
- Workshops for parents build an understanding of college and career readiness skills the school stresses to support student growth. As shared by students, teachers and parents, there is an expectation that students demonstrate personal behaviors conducive to success, including respect, perseverance, determination, honesty and integrity. Students are given the tools necessary to self-assess and reflect on their learning before, during and after instruction. The school's "Bucket Filling" campaign adopted from the book, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today*, has put a focus on making good choices, treating classmates with respect and having personal responsibility for actions.