



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Hernando De Soto Elementary School**

**M130**

**143 Baxter Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10013**

**Principal: Renny Fong**

**Date of review: February 27, 2015**

**Lead Reviewer: Bonnie Laboy**

## The School Context

Hernando De Soto is an elementary school with 1002 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 5% Hispanic, 4% White, 88% Asian, and 2% multi-racial students. The student body includes 17 % English language learners and 2% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 97.9%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

### Findings

School leaders utilize a variety of strategies and provide meaningful supports that exemplify a culture of mutual accountability for the school's high expectations. The school fosters positive and significant partnerships with families and engages them in supporting their children's progress.

### Impact

High expectations communicated through verbal and written school-wide systems support a rigorous learning environment where accountability is reciprocal among all members of the community that focus on a culture of college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Student friendly rubrics and checklist aligned to units of study help students identify the skills they need to acquire in order to improve their work and meet the expectations to move to the next performance level. Parents are familiar with the rubrics and utilize them to support their children. The rubrics also serve to set unified expectations across the school. In five out of seven classrooms visited, students worked with checklists and/or rubrics to guide their work.
- School leaders communicate high expectations through professional learning sessions, emails, newsletters, curricular planning meetings and observation feedback sessions with teachers. In addition, teachers indicated that they hold themselves accountable to student performance and overall school improvement, through both formal and informal professional discussions that are ongoing and focus on student work as well as setting and honoring professional norms of practice.
- Parents shared that the principal's open door policy, teacher's responsiveness, the integration of the arts and extracurricular activities, promote a pathway to college and career readiness. They indicated the school strikes a balance of challenging academic work with fun enrichment opportunities, which makes their children feel challenged as well as motivated.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Although the school uses common assessments, performance based rubrics and tasks aligned to key standards to gain a clear understanding of student progress toward goals not all assessment practices offer a clear portrait of student mastery.

### Impact

Curricular, instructional adjustments and actionable feedback lead students towards the advancement of student learning goals to demonstrate increased mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a variety of assessments to monitor student growth. Teachers regularly examine student performance tasks and reading levels to track progress. However, reading assessment types vary throughout the course of the year, thus, painting an inconsistent portrait of growth and mastery in reading.
- Grade team teacher specialists meet regularly to analyze student data across and among grades in or to make instructional decisions and refine tasks and rubrics to ensure that students are achieving at appropriate grade levels. Recently, the math teacher specialists identified a need to address students' ability to tackle word problems in the upper grades.
- Students shared work products that included rubrics and teacher feedback that highlighted next steps for improvement. Students explained how the rubrics and checklists helped them set goals to improve their writing. For example, students shared their figurative language and metaphor goals and how they worked to improve these literary techniques in their writing.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

The school makes purposeful decisions to ensure coherence of units of study across content areas. Student work analysis informs curricular enhancements providing access to curricula for all students.

### Impact

The needs of the diverse population are targeted to create instructional coherence and college and career readiness across grade levels and content areas. Curricula refinements cognitively engage all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Unit plans across subjects cite the content area learning targets aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Lesson plans include academic tasks that incorporate reading, writing and discussion tasks to deepen student content knowledge that are coupled with appropriate scaffolds for struggling students. Accommodations for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) are identified in unit maps and lesson plans. Two lessons observed had small group instruction provided by Speech Teachers via a push-in model that supports vocabulary and reading development.
- In English Language Arts, classes use discipline specific rubrics, including performance descriptors for four levels of proficiency. A score of 3 indicates that by the end of the task, students will have demonstrated solid evidence of success. During the student meeting, students readily articulate the value of each rubric to reflect upon their progress and establish next steps for improvements.
- The use of vertical and horizontal curriculum planning teams led by teacher specialists from each grade ensures that curricula is aligned to build coherence and promote college and career readiness. They consistently examine student work to collaboratively design and refine units of study and lesson plans. For example, the first grade team refined their narrative unit based on input from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers regarding students' use of details and story structure.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

### **Findings**

Classroom practices are guided by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and a coherent set of beliefs around quality instruction; however, not all classrooms were marked by high quality extensions.

### **Impact**

While teaching practices promote student led conversations, college and career readiness skills and student ownership, not all students are challenged to their fullest potential.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In all seven classrooms visited, teachers provide collaborative, meaningful tasks and students worked on-task together. However, there were missed opportunities in some classes for higher level students to be engaged.
- Classes visited reflected students working in collaborative groups including pairs, triads and small groups. Teaching strategies and resources included student-friendly rubrics, student-friendly checklists, word walls, conversation prompts, and group work etiquette to encourage student thinking and conversation which produced meaningful student work products. In five out of seven classrooms visited, students worked with checklists and/or rubrics to guide their work.
- In two classrooms visited, the Speech Teacher provided small group instruction to support the language and vocabulary development of ELLs and SWDs as well as support their reading comprehension by asking them to cite text-based evidence.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

**Findings**

Grade level and vertical teams analyze student work and assessment data of all students. Representatives across grade levels, entitled “Teacher Specialists”, share grade-level inquiry team findings by subject area and support common core alignment.

**Impact**

The school’s professional collaborations foster reflection, enhance the instructional capacity of teachers and contribute effective instructional strategies that focus on improving student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry based collaboration that consistently examines student performance data to strengthen teacher practice as well as to make curricular adjustments. Teacher teams examine the standards that are below and above their grade level to plan lessons that address learning gaps.
- Teacher Specialists examine student work both horizontally and vertically to adjust curriculum and to adjust student supports. A Teacher Specialist team observed, analyzed student data collected across grades to surface trends and patterns of both student strengths and weaknesses in reading. The Teacher Specialist then worked to make recommendations to the staff around use of assessments to inform instruction.
- The school’s Teacher Specialist model enhances the school’s distributive leadership and fosters a greater sense of collective accountability to overall student performance. These teacher leaders play a role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. For example, the Teacher Specialists, who represent each grade in the school, are currently working towards making recommendations to the entire school staff regarding strengthening cohesive school assessment practices.