



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Amalia Castro

Elementary M142

**100 Attorney Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Rhonda Levy

**Date of review: March 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

The School Context

Amalia Castro is an elementary school with 384 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 14% Black, 76% Hispanic, 4% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 33% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	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

All teachers engage in professional collaborations focused on strengthening their instructional capacity and improving student achievement.

Impact

Teachers have become an internal resource, supporting the professional learning of individual teachers and teacher teams.

Supporting Evidence

- Special education teachers attend workshops provided by the Division of Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners. This professional development supports teachers in resources and strategies that can support various learners in accessing rigorous content. Teachers, who attend, present learning to their peers. They engage in discussions and planning to identify places in curricula and lesson plans where supports and extension can be embedded.
- Three teachers received professional development in facilitation protocols through the Teacher Leadership Program. These teachers participate on the instructional cabinet along with a grade 5 and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to plan and facilitate professional learning each Monday. This time is used to look at student work through various lenses. Teachers use this information to make adaptations to the curriculum, instructional groups, and instructional practice.
- Teachers have participated in the Teacher Leadership Program along with the assistant principal. These teachers have increased the use of video-taping for peer reflection feedback on practice. This team has implemented the use of protocols, across grades, for looking at student work with a special focus on students who are on the cusp of an advanced level. They work to surface gaps and target instruction to support student needs.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across grades and classrooms, teachers use common summative and formative assessments, aligned to curricula to provide actionable feedback, measure student progress, adjust curricula and inform instructional decision-making.

Impact

While the school tracks individual student performance and progress across subject areas, the school is not yet consistently triangulating data to evidence a clear alignment between teaching practices and increased mastery for student groups.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers take official running records four times a year and submit data to administration. Students not making progress are identified for supports such as Great Leaps or Foundations and receive guided reading instruction two to three times each week. Using this information to extend learning for some on and above level students is in the beginning stages.
- Teachers in upper grade classes noticed students some struggling in non-fiction units with determining the main idea and supporting claims relevant details. Teacher incorporated several organizers that support student thinking in different ways. They also increased the use of annotating and chunking to support evaluation.
- Rubrics are used consistently across grades and content to give feedback to students and as a monitoring piece for teachers. However, rubrics are largely used by staff and students at the conclusion of the work, as opposed to initially, which would set clear expectations and guide students on the path to higher-level completion.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders ensure an engaging and rigorous curriculum that is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically embed the instructional shifts. Student work is used to refine planning and tasks.

Impact

The curriculum promotes college and career readiness and active engagement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a Reggio-Emelia project based curriculum in pre-kindergarten through grade two to develop oral language and collaborative learning. Grades three through five work with Expeditionary Learning. The school utilizes Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project to provide students with extended writing opportunities across genres. The school works with Carl Anderson to strengthen writing through conferring and build Grand Conversations into units of study to engage students in talk about content and thinking.
- Math in Focus is the foundation for the math curriculum in kindergarten through grade 5. Teachers plan to ensure students have regular opportunities to explain their math thinking orally and in writing. Teachers participate in ongoing professional development, planning for application and investigation along with math accuracy and fluency.
- The school has self-contained bridge classes along with Integrate Collaborative Team Teaching Classes (ICT) to serve special needs students. Teachers from self-contained classrooms attend common planning with teachers on the higher grade of the bridge to ensure students are working with grade level content, adapted to their needs. Lesson plans indicate opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding through art, drama, verbally and in writing. Literacy plans include text previews, chunking, annotation, note taking and the use of organizers to provide scaffolds to complex text and to extend writing pieces.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers provide multiple entry points in high level tasks, for all learners, which advance student discussions.

Impact

Practices provide access to the curricula for all learners and result in high levels of student participation in discussions and tasks. Extensions and opportunities to increase student ownership are being identified and implemented.

Supporting Evidence

- In a first grade classroom, students were working on independent reading with story maps and questions sheets to guide them through the skills they were practicing. Another student worked on fluency while reading into a recorder to hear himself. Two students were working on Starfall to practice decoding, while another two worked with Tutor Mate. An English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher pushed into the class, working with a guided reading group on finding the patterns in books. A paraprofessional worked with a small group with mainstreamed students working on comprehension and fluency. The classroom teacher pulled small guided groups and was working with students in an A-C band to support strategies for figuring out tricky words.
- Students in a fifth grade class were comparing and contrasting two pieces of informational text on the rainforest. Students had engaged in close reading, highlighting and taking margin notes. Students moved into group work, where they had role assignments and a rubric to guide them through the completion of informational presentations on different aspects of their non-fiction reading.
- In a fourth grade math class students worked to solve the Blueberry Candy Mystery which involved deconstructing a word problem and creating boxes of candy using information about fractions. Students worked in groups. Each group had organizers and guiding questions with a conclusion that asked them to share their strategies and develop new questions.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has established a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations to staff and families on the path to student achievement.

Impact

Structures for communication and collaboration are strengthening and there is mutual accountability developing for student achievement and school improvement.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents receive regular communications through newsletters, report cards and technology based programs including Class DOJO. Parents are invited to the school monthly for Family Fridays where they can engage in learning activities along with their child. Teachers send home post cards to parents to highlight successes related to academic and personal behaviors. Teachers conduct workshops for parents to understand student reading levels, the skills they have mastered and are working on and ways they can support their child at home. Parents can also access teachers for 1:1 meetings on Tuesdays that are set aside for parent involvement.
- Parent participated in a trip to the Wonder of Learning along with teachers and a professional development consultant to understand the Reggio-Emelia approach to learning for the lower grade students and how components are utilized in the upper grades to support student engagement and collaboration.
- Title III funds are used to support a Saturday program for students and their families. Parents have attended field trips with students and teachers to the Hall of Science and a Math Flocabulary workshop to gain a deeper understanding of the content students are studying and resources that can support student learning outside of the classroom.
- Administration conducts cycles of observation and feedback through the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Observational data is used to inform professional development. Teachers who engage in professional development are accountable for sharing their learning and also complete reflections on the impact their learning has had on their instructional practice and student performance.
- Teachers who engage in the teacher leadership program support teacher accountability using protocols, deadlines, videotaping and inter-visitation practices. Teachers note that their peers help them to grow their teaching practice through these collaborative structures.