

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Louis Armstrong School**

**Elementary School Q143**

**34-74 113 Street  
Queens  
NY 11368**

**Principal: Jerry Brito**

**Date of review: January 15, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Madelene Chan**

## The School Context

PS 143 is an elementary school with 1,811 students from grade Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 2% Black, 93% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 45% English language learners and 9% 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 95.5%.

## 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>Developing</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</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>Proficient</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>Proficient</b>
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### Findings:

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Expectations and ongoing feedback connected to college and career readiness are consistently communicated to students.

### Impact:

Accountability and agreement amongst staff, students and families supports the structures around the school's high expectations. The school is working towards a focused road that leads to increased awareness of student requirements and progress toward student achievement and college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Parents and students attend grade specific events that focus on grade level advancement strategies. For example, the first grade held an event called "An Apple with Your Teacher" in which parents, students and teachers discussed ways to help students at home. Parents stated that these events enable them to be more aware of the various curricula and empower them to help their children with next steps like reading comprehension, identifying characters' motives and reading between the lines to understand the author's purpose.
- A "Principal's Memo" is distributed every two weeks to inform the staff about school updates and expectations involving instructional and operational goals. Teachers comment that this document helps them align their planning with the broader school goals like developing student autonomy and giving a clearer voice to students during questions and discussions.
- Frequent classroom observation cycles and peer-visitations inform training and hold staff accountable for meeting high expectations. For example, the staff is collaborative in offering peer feedback and accepting best practices from their colleagues. Data indicates that improvements are being made throughout the school in school focus indicators depicting engaging students, creating an environment of respect, designing coherent instruction, knowledge of content and pedagogy and questioning and discussion skills from the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

While pedagogy provides instructional supports, including the school's instructional focus of strengthening questions and discussion, the use of strategic entry points and extensions that promote deep reasoning in student work products varies across the school.

### Impact

Across classrooms, teaching strategies provide for curricula extensions to support students in producing meaningful work products, but all learners in specific subgroups are not taking ownership of their work and there are limited opportunities for choice or voice of tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work folders and portfolios in the majority of classrooms visited revealed consistent work in writing that ranged from developing focus and organization to presenting a persuasive argument about a particular topic. In a third grade and Kindergarten integrated co-teaching class, text-based evidence and counter claims were evident in small group lessons on finding the author's purpose and details of a story. Although these persuasive arguments were seen in some students' work, there were uneven levels of in-depth tasks and analysis regarding peer-to-peer reviews and project-based learning. For example students were self-reflective of their work, but there were limited responses to next steps by peers.
- In classes visited students were responsible for a variety of topics like identifying character traits, subtracting using account balances, subtracting using arrays and story problems and reflecting on a text using the character's mood. Although most students were showing understanding of the work, tasks did not allow students to make deeper connections between the concepts and real world application. For example, in one upper grade class, students were analyzing descriptions and reading carefully for key ideas and details, but were not able to discuss why they were learning about the Civil War.
- In all classes visited, students were enthusiastic to participate in class discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions. Student autonomy and student generated questions did not yet appear to be in the fabric of the school's culture of learning. For example, in the majority of classes visited questions were teacher-directed with limited opportunities for students to re-direct their thoughts to peers.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

The school is working towards planning and aligning all curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) so that higher order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners across grades and content areas.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions are on a path to provide all learners with access across grades and content areas. Academic tasks are being formatted to encourage all students to think beyond the obvious and increase their higher order thinking skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- Guided reading time is infused into the literacy curriculum to provide low proficiency students the support they need. Additionally, English language learner (ELL) support staff instruct on site in students' classrooms rather than use a pullout-teaching model and have begun to use On Our Way to English, which is Common Core-aligned as the literacy program to help ELLs achieve proficiency. Although quantitative results are not tabulated, teachers state that students are more aware of the task objectives and able to work with a partner to complete assignments.
- Teachers are working on integrating the content area units of study with the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Station work has been a process/strategy that some teachers are implementing to isolate a skill in order to meet the needs of students. At this time, however, planned instructional strategies to integrate the shifts are still being developed.
- Teachers have been creating and refining writing tasks by focusing on the purpose of the lessons and their efficacy. Although teachers have been mindful of the Common Core Learning Standards and student data in creating these tasks it is still a work in progress due to the uneven levels of data determining its success. For example, teachers are collecting formative and summative data, but the data collected is not being used for planning to target students' needs.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Through teacher teams, consistent examination of student work and data is an ongoing process. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

### **Impact**

The work of teacher teams has resulted in greater awareness of how to improve pedagogy and strengthen student progress on assessments. Shared leadership protocols are used to build capacity and improve student learning as teachers have input on key decisions, teaching practices and curricula choices.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Meetings with teacher teams and teacher leads enabled work around looking at data and student products by focusing on protocols for analyzing results of the Item Skills Analysis for ELA and Mathematics state tests. Teachers were in accord that these practices help them strengthen their collaboration and supported planning decisions across the school. Results of team practices indicated that students with disabilities benefitted from additional small group work in mathematics and guided reading.
- Teacher teams review the results from recent baseline reading assessments for end of unit reviews to make instructional decisions. The teams then share ideas to adjust teaching practices, per grade, aligned to data and students' performance tasks. For example, during a team meeting observed, a teacher shared the trends in analyzing a reading assessment which demonstrated the need for further extensions in context clues and citing text-based evidence.
- Using Think Central, the electronic portion of Go Math! that generates student reports illustrating the achieved standards, student targets are tracked and analyzed by teacher team members. For example, during a teacher team meeting teachers were able to reference the reports and determine what mathematics strategies were used that worked. Teachers were in accord that this system helps them isolate the standards that still need attention, per unit, and address students' individual needs.
- Distributed leadership is in evidence in teacher teams. Teachers are rotating roles of facilitating their meetings so that all members have a voice and equal responsibilities are shared. Teachers posit that the administration has encouraged them to choose resources for literacy, writing and math that will benefit the students' styles of learning.

**Findings**

The school uses common assessments to track student progress. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**

Teachers make effective adjustments to lessons to meet students' needs. The school's systems to determine progress through data findings and analysis, in addition to during instruction, are used to adjust lessons and tasks to better meet students' needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Ongoing checks for understanding and student self- assessments can be found throughout various classrooms on written work. Protocols like conference notes and quick checks have been established to better students' understanding of writing skills and strategies. Students agree that their peer-to-peer assessments and reflection sheets help them understand their writing goals and next steps for future assignments. For example, in a second grade class, the teacher provided students with reflection sheets and students were able to review their strategies for finding character traits. Additionally, the teacher had students work in small groups to justify their writing corrections. When seeing that not all students were on the same page the teacher worked with students separately until the task was successful.
- Teachers have been looking critically at assessments. The fourth grade teacher team reviews the Item Skills Analysis from the State English Language Arts and Mathematics tests and identifies trends like the need for more academic vocabulary and assistance with extended response questions. As a result of their research they have added specific lessons into their pacing schedule and students have shown progress in the aforementioned areas of study.
- Teachers have taken the lead in determining their instructional needs through analysis of students' data. Teachers are aligning school wide assessments to address the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, common writing tasks and accompanying rubrics were developed in alignment with the Common Core and the ReadyGen literacy program. As a result, students in the upper grades are showing progress in the areas of focus, organization and student voice.
- Currently, the school community uses assessment tools such as running records, ReadyGen unit assessments, Go Math unit assessments, Words Their Way assessments, writing rubrics and supplementary assessment tools. Data is collected school wide and analyzed by class and grade. This process, although new to the staff, has assisted in helping teachers check for understanding and adjust lessons to meet students' needs. For example, teacher teams and individual teachers review conference notes in writing by isolating skills and determining improvement of proficiency. As a result, Kindergarten students are receiving more assistance with providing details and word choice to their writing.