



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Laurelton School**

**Elementary-Middle School Q156**

**229-02 137 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11413**

**Principal: Estelle Moore**

**Date of review: February 5, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray**

## The School Context

Laurelton School is an elementary-middle school with 388 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 90% Black, 7% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 10% 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 91.2%.

## 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>Celebration</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>Focus</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>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>Additional Findings</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

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and the content standards. Higher-order thinking skills are consistently emphasized for all students across all grades.

### Impact

The school's decisions about curricula build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). Academic tasks are systematically designed to push student thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has worked diligently to align all curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards. The school's curricula include critical thinking components and writing across all academic areas. Students focus on the close reading of non-fiction texts and practice text-citation, thereby addressing the instructional shifts. This process is repeated across all content areas. It is explicit in English language arts curricular units where students are expected to utilize a variety of non-fiction sources to support their informational and argumentative writing. In both math and literacy, the curriculum units intentionally build fluency by recycling and spiraling skills, such as guided reading, mental math, number facts and operations with fractions.
- Lesson plans were available for all visited classrooms. They included learning targets, the Common Core Standard addressed, the assessments, the essential questions and academic vocabulary. The academic vocabulary enabled students to successfully engage with grade-specific complex texts. As students mastered the vocabulary, they were able to formulate questions at the conceptual level rather than just recall or comprehension. For example, in science, students were able to move beyond the scientific method to the art of careful observation and deliberate inferences.
- Curricula maps indicate that the school develops and adapts rigorous academic tasks through the resources available from Engage NY, the Department of Education's Common Core Library, and the New York City social studies, and science scope and sequence. The school modifies Ready Gen for reading and Go Math for math according to classroom needs. They use CMP 3 and Expeditionary Learning in the middle school where the students are taught to research topics using multiple sources and to present as a coherent thesis to their peers. Two students from the eighth grade were winners at the district level science fair.
- Unit plans in all content areas illustrate multiple designs of academic tasks, with numerous scaffolds and multiple entry points for all students that emphasize higher level engagement for all learners. For example, science and technology lesson plans indicate the use of visual aids, various graphic organizers, selected websites, video clips and hands-on classroom experiments.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

While teaching practices provide instructional supports, including questioning and discussion techniques, the use of strategic entry points and extensions that support all learners including ELLs and SWDs varies across the school.

### Impact

Across classrooms, curricula extensions enable students to produce meaningful work products. However, there are still missed opportunities for all learners (including ELLs and SWDs) to take ownership of their learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- In all visited classrooms, teachers used a modified workshop model of teaching with mini-lessons, modeling and teacher demonstrations followed by individual and group practice. The school attempts to generate student discussion with frequent “turn and talks” in response to teacher questions. During independent and group practice, teachers circulate the room to support struggling students. At other points in observed lessons, students work collaboratively on performance tasks that required resilient effort. The majority of students’ questions were for clarification or explanation.
- The English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, who is shared with another school, pulls students out at certain times during the school day or works as an additional instructor in the classroom to provide support to English language learners. She aligns her instruction with the school’s focus on improving the depth of questioning and the level of student engagement through discussion. Special education students and ELLs are constantly being pushed beyond the social use of language to efficacy with academic vocabulary.
- During a grade 3 Integrated Co-Teaching English language arts class, students were assigned to flexible groups and provided specific roles in the preparation of a class presentation. They were required to identify characters in a text and find evidence of certain personality traits. Students then made brief presentations to the class citing their text evidence. Only four roles were defined so there were two students with the same role in some groups. Some struggling students were supported by their peers who attempted with varying degrees of success to explain things to peers.
- A review of student portfolios revealed consistent work in argumentative writing, writing to inform and writing on demand. In reading and writing lessons, close reading obliges students to look more deeply into the texts. Teachers are creating opportunities for students to write more extended responses to questions that demand that they infer from the text. The work products reflected high levels of student thinking even though feedback from teachers sometimes lacked specificity. When students receive specific feedback they are able to make the required changes. Without specificity the students sometimes struggled to improve their product. Students were able to discuss the level of their work when requested.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

The school uses common assessments across classrooms in all grades and subject areas, track student progress and consistently use checks for understanding.

### Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through data and during instruction are used consistently to guide adjustments in unit and lesson plans to meet students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses common assessments in all content areas which provide essential information on student performance and progress. Some of these assessments are pre-, mid- and post-unit assessments with Ready Gen, Go Math, CMP 3 and Expeditionary Learning. Others are MOSL assessments, for example, Ed Performance. Formative and summative data include Fountas and Pinnel reading levels, Teacher's College running records, writing-on-demand and chapter tests.
- Teachers use individual and group conferring and strategy lessons to monitor students' progress towards their goals. English language learners and special education students additionally use web-based assessments like Read 180 and Achieve 3000 so that the technology teacher can provide them with appropriate reading material that they can master independently.
- Across classrooms, teachers use multiple measures as checks for understanding. These include mid-workshop interruptions during which teachers ask clarifying questions. Other techniques are the parking lot, thumbs up/thumbs down, individualized conferring, exit slips, peer student checklists and task-specific rubrics. Students also use self-assessment weekly and provide peer feedback. Some observed adjustments included additional time in guided reading, use of technology such as laptops with specific tutorials and a variety of graphic organizers.
- A review of teachers' conference notes indicated that formative assessments lead to instructional adjustments, such as provision of different leveled texts, regrouping of students and re-teaching of challenging concepts.

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

### **Findings**

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. They establish a culture for learning that offers ongoing feedback that helps students and families understand student progress toward those expectations.

### **Impact**

Families express appreciation and demonstrate collaboration on the school-wide practices that help them understand their student's progress. The school's focus on college and career readiness skills actively assists their students in transitioning to the next level in education and life skills.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams are organized by grade and content area. The teams use protocols for looking at student work and use feedback from administrators from the Danielson Framework for Teaching as the basis for high quality teaching and the inquiry process. Faculty members have instituted a culture for learning that provides all students, especially ELLs, SWDs and struggling students with focused, effective feedback. The feedback includes clear next steps that students can comprehend and explain. These steps determine student accountability for achievement of learning goals and expectations to prepare them for their next level. This includes preparing students for high school choices, the expectations for taking the Regents exam coursework, and habits of mind such as note-taking, annotation and synthesis of ideas.
- Parents explained that the guidance counselor, teachers and administrators work to support students in making progress and preparing for college and careers. The school encourages and supports parents in partnering with the learning community through frequent communication, progress reports and leadership opportunities. Parents conduct business for the parent association and also the school leadership team. They engage in needs assessments with the school community and their ideas are welcomed at the table. Monthly calendars, parent newsletters, flyers and notes home as well as phone and email correspondence help to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of events and contribute to the school's goals for student achievement.
- Students share that school leaders and faculty help them to do well in their classes by providing essential feedback on challenging tasks and rubrics, and by providing numerous opportunities to improve their performance. Students shared work products that have feedback based on rubrics that is detailed and student-friendly. Students were able to explain their current performance level and the plan for movement to the next level. They said that teachers explain what they need to do better and the skills they need to acquire for college and career.
- The school's guidance counselor and the parent coordinator communicate with parents by phone and during workshops and meetings to understand student progress towards the school's expectations. In addition, they use flyers, newsletters, and school calendars to inform them of relevant information on the workshop offerings and college and career readiness initiatives. The guidance counselor conducts informational meetings for families to prepare families for the next level.

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

### **Findings**

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

### **Impact**

The analysis of student work for students that teachers have in common is resulting in improved teacher practice, increased student performance, and empowered teacher leaders who have a voice in decision-making that impacts on instruction and student learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams review the results of the benchmark assessments that are administered throughout the year. They perform regular item analyses and utilize the information to support struggling learners including ELLs and SWDs. Examples of teacher teams are grade level teams, the grade facilitators and instructional team, parent/teacher community team and the character education team.
- Teacher teams meet informally up to five times per week on their common preps and lunch periods in addition to the formal weekly meeting. ESL and special education teachers are integrated into the teams. Grades pre-kindergarten through five meet on grade teams while the middle school grade meets as department specialists.
- Teacher leaders meet weekly with the instructional cabinet to discuss professional development (PD) and staff priorities. The process began in the summer as they planned for professional development on Mondays. The PD calendar for the entire school year was initiated and is maintained by teacher leaders. Topics on the Danielson Framework, Common Core strategies and classroom management are among many that were selected by the teaching staff.
- Teachers shared that they are empowered to have substantial input on decisions affecting the selection and refinement of curricula resources, the placement and grouping of students and the interviewing and selection of new teachers.
- The observed third grade teacher team brought student work from their classes and used the triad protocol to discuss the salient points of selected students' output. They had a common rubric and shared common assessments. They were able to identify trends in students' writing, such as insufficient details, that would respond to explicit instruction. The teachers made specific plans to try different interventions while checking their effectiveness. One idea was requiring three details to support each thesis.