



**Department of  
Education**

*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Arthur R. Ashe Jr.**

**Elementary School Q161**

**101-33 124<sup>th</sup> Street  
Queens  
NY 11419**

**Principal: Jill Hoder**

**Date of review: November 7, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

## The School Context

Arthur R. Ashe Jr. is an elementary school with 708 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 17% Hispanic, 2% White, and 63% Asian, and 12% other students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

## 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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

The vast majority of teachers work in teams to collectively: identify goals for student improvement, engage in the ongoing practice of using and exchanging data, share and reflect on areas for improvements to instructional practices, and refine and discover solutions to promote increased student achievement.

### Impact

Through systematic analyses of student work, teachers' coherent decisions about next instructional steps have strengthened pedagogical capacity and maximized opportunities for student subgroups to achieve mastery, as evident in student writing products, as well as the increases noted in the 2013-2014 School's Quality Snapshot, with increases of 3.4% and 6.6% in English language arts and math, respectively.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in teams determine important topics to assess with common formative assessments. During their weekly meetings, they consistently interpret evidence from unit tests used to evaluate student performance as well as identify concepts and skills students need to know and be able to do, as necessitated by the Common Core.
- Teachers in teams systematically analyze grade-wide common assessment data from unit tests and student work to garner information about students' progress and learning needs relative to the learning goals. In addition, they consistently track growth in skills across their grades and make instructional and curricular decisions to ensure that all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with IEPs, achieve mastery toward goals and respond to instruction. Their data analysis revealed gaps in conceptual understanding and fluency in math and, thus, has propelled the school wide instructional focus on math.
- Teachers serving on the school's vertical and inquiry teams participate in robust approaches, including peer observations and use protocols to effectively monitor student learning. For example, they use the Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional (ORID) protocol, which supports reflective dialogue relative to the coherence of pedagogy, such as asking higher-order thinking questions and fostering student-to-student conversations, and has bolstered the improvement of outcomes for all learners.
- As a result of the school's action plan, which was created to support students' reasoning through the construction of viable arguments, the math vertical team, comprised of teacher "leads," focused on problem solving routines across grades and their relation to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and school goals.
- Vertical teams also turnkey grade level professional learning to build capacity in the building. For example, one of the next steps discussed during the meeting observed was to develop uniform, student-friendly rubrics across the school.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, curricula-aligned lessons exemplify the belief that students learn best when they are expected to participate in discussions with peers to analyze content, cite evidence, use appropriate academic vocabulary. In addition, high quality supports and extensions were in place to support the efforts of students who needed them.

### Impact

As a result of the school's instructional beliefs, teaching strategies across a preponderance of classrooms, as well as student work products and discussions, reveal high levels of student engagement, participation, and ownership, and increased student learning outcomes among all learners, including the school's relevant subgroups. However, the practice of leveraging the use of multiple access points and adjusting the level of task complexity to student readiness was not evident in all classrooms visited.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a preponderance of classrooms, high levels of rigor were observed in classroom lessons, as demonstrated by extended talk and coherent argumentative and opinion writing essays with the support of evidence. In addition, teachers and students strategically posed deep, higher-order questions, such as those asked during a close reading lesson in a third grade class: "What are some of the ways the Athabascans worked together to accomplish the goals of the village?" "How do these details support the main idea?"
- Pyramids depicting sample questions aligned to Webb's Depth of Knowledge Levels, such as "What ideas can you add to \_\_\_\_\_ and "How can you prove \_\_\_\_\_?" were accessible and frequently used by students in all classrooms as they engaged in conversations with their peers. Additionally, in the vast majority of classrooms observed, students routinely crafted their own questions.
- In a fourth grade class, students worked with partners as they debated and cited text-based evidence to defend their perspective of whether Christopher Columbus was a hero or villain. Following this activity, students were encouraged to self-reflect on their handling of the debate using a rubric that assessed active listening, questioning, argument and content, and use of evidence.
- In a second grade class, the teacher paired an English language learner with another student and provided illustrations to support the lesson objective, which was to identify characters and their traits. Similarly, in a fourth grade math class, the teacher provided small group instruction and the use of manipulatives to support her students in a lesson on using estimation to check the reasonableness of their answers. However, the provision of extensions for high achieving students who have mastered the standard is a practice that is not yet pervasive across the school.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

Across a preponderance of classrooms, teachers gather information from a variety of sources that accurately reflects how well students are achieving curriculum expectations. They consistently engage in ongoing checks for understanding and offer detailed and actionable feedback to students.

### **Impact**

As a result, these shared practices help teachers identify gaps in student understanding and have led to students having increased awareness and understanding of themselves as learners. In addition, teachers provide actionable feedback to students and make effective adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers maintain a plethora of data on their students, including detailed conference notes, checklists, and end of unit assessments that are color coded and delineated by type of skill, including, but not limited to, focus, organization, development, language and vocabulary, and conventions in writing, as well as comprehension, constructed and extended responses. Based on data culled from Ready GEN modules, 75% of the school's English language learners and 100% of the Students with Disabilities made progress since the baseline assessments.
- In a third grade class, while checking for understanding, a third grade teacher pulled a small group to work on main idea. She reviewed the vocabulary words on the page and explained, "We will reread and try to figure out the main idea together; let's begin by looking at the bold words on the page." Similarly, in a second grade integrated co-teaching class, one of the teachers realized that a student needed additional modeling and immediately assigned him to a buddy who had mastered the content.
- Actionable teacher feedback supports students' understanding of their next steps toward improvement across the vast majority of classrooms. For example, in addressing a student's written response to a political cartoon about Native Americans, one teacher provided the following feedback, "Excellent use of text-based answers. You can improve your answer with a concluding sentence."
- One fifth-grader expressed on a post-it that, based on the rubric, she used "domain-specific vocabulary and precise language." The same student also wrote that she needed to use more evidence from the text to support the facts she included in her nonfiction essay about the Coorong lagoon, an endangered ecosystem in Australia.

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

School leaders consistently message high expectations to teachers on the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, the school effectively communicates high expectations to students and partners with families to support the expectations connected to readiness for college and careers.

### Impact

As a result, the school has a vibrant culture of mutual accountability for those expectations and ensures that students, including high-need subgroups, own their own educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence:

- Teachers share lesson plans and resources, such as teacher-created math problem solving tasks, as well as structures for flexible grouping, and targeted interventions with one another for the purposes of feedback, illustrative of their mutual accountability.
- Teachers across the vast majority of classrooms also explicitly outline learning intentions and expectations for students by posting and reiterating learning objectives for every lesson. In addition, they make clear to the students the level of performance that they need to accomplish so that they are positioned along the trajectory towards successful learning.
- One of the expectations of teachers is to create opportunities for students to use grade specific academic language that is reflected in their daily discussions and work products. To support this school wide endeavor, school leaders announce an “idiom of the week,” along with a definition and a sentence in which the idiom is used. Student work and discussions across grades and content areas reflect the use of academic language and students have a sense of ownership in their own learning and are prepared to progress through their next level of coursework and learning tasks.
- In the school’s lobby, an enlarged color-coded chart reflecting the reading level expectations for each grade is prominently displayed. Parents articulated that the teachers send home individual progress reports on reading levels, along with a breakdown of grade-level expectations at various intervals throughout the year, as well as math unit assessments. Teachers provide parents with achievement data and offer parents suggestions about ways they can help their children succeed. Parents report that they extend learning at home by exposing their children to nonfiction books and asking questions about their work and assert that they are considered dynamic partners in ensuring their children achieve explicit and rigorous goals.
- In addition to the principal’s weekly newsletter, which consistently communicates the units of study and expectations for each grade, the school also purchased ClassDojo, a tool that enables teachers to provide clear, focused, and effective feedback to parents through an electronic platform. Teachers, through weekly, as well as quick, periodic messages, send information to parents on students’ learning habits, such as active listening, student engagement, and skill progression, that informs their efforts to support their children’s learning.

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

Teachers have established clear learning outcomes with matching instruction and assessments into interdisciplinary, sequenced units of study that intentionally and purposefully address the instructional shifts and serve as high-quality structures.

### Impact

The school's curricular materials, continuously refined using student work and data, provide an effective framework for coherent instructional design, thoughtful planning, and engaging delivery of high-yield instruction that promotes college and career readiness for all learners. Thus, all students, including students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and high-level learners, are consistently provided opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks.

### Supporting Evidence:

- Cross-curricula unit plans and academic tasks across all grades subject areas, including art, are Common Core-aligned and strategically embed the instructional shifts, such as using evidence from sources to inform or make an argument and building transferable vocabulary needed to access grade level complex texts.
- Modifications to the License Plates Performance Task for second grade included the use of: snap cubes to model decomposing; graphic organizers to scaffold decomposition; and number sentence structure models. In addition, strategies to accommodate learning-style preferences ascertained by student responses to the Visual, Aural, Read/Write Kinesthetic (VARK) questionnaire, are included in curricular documents to ensure that teachers use a variety of modes during their instruction to reach every learner.
- School leaders and teachers decisively use Google Docs, an online storage system, to store and edit their curricular documents, including unit and lesson plans, and resources, which ensures coherence across grades and subject areas. For example, the English language arts (ELA) curriculum maps across the grades include: anchor texts, highlighted skills, goals, enduring understandings, essential questions, measures of student learning, such as selecting a topic and becoming a researcher in the fourth grade, unit performance-based assessments, and specific Common Core Learning Standards.
- Similarly, across all grades, the school's math curricular documents include: critical areas, such as Place Value and Operations with Whole Numbers; chapter topics; essential questions; target standards, standard mathematical practices, including modeling with mathematics and using appropriate tools strategically, and performance assessment tasks for each unit.
- Flexible amendments are made to the curricular documents to meet the range of student learning needs. For example, teachers across the grades ensure the use of technological resources to enhance curricular design, such as [www.khanacademy.com](http://www.khanacademy.com), [www.mathplayground.com](http://www.mathplayground.com), and [www.mathaids.com](http://www.mathaids.com) and real world videos, such as Forestry and Replanting, to complement a unit on place value, multiplication, and expressions. Such resources ensure access to curricula and tasks for the school's variety of learners, including the school's ELLs, students with disabilities, and highest achievers.