



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Alexander Graham Bell

Elementary School Q205

**75-25 Bell Boulevard
Queens
NY 11364**

Principal: Karen Scott-Piazza

**Date of review: November 21, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Rhonda Dawn Farkas**

The School Context

Alexander Graham Bell is an elementary school with 321 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 4% Black, 22% Hispanic, 34% White, 2% multi-racial, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and .31% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.0%.

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

Across the school, teacher teams engage in organized, inquiry-based collaborations to evaluate assessment data and student work and make effective and collaborative instructional decisions.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in the promotion of school goals, school-wide instructional coherency, improved pedagogy, and progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams across the school have created rubrics and their own performance tasks in math to set standards consistent with the Common Core Learning Standards. One teacher spoke of how she and her colleagues were leads in the decision to complement the *GO Math!* program with Math Modules through Engage NY, Exemplars, and Contexts for Learning. The work of the teacher teams is evident in a resounding 10% increase on the New York State math assessments, yielding 89% proficiency, with 15% progress of Students with Individualized Education Plans.
- Interdisciplinary teams of teachers meet to develop overarching learning goals and ensure that their instruction is align with content standards and core curricula.
- A strategic analysis of the school's English language arts (ELA) data revealed a slight decrease, which prompted teacher teams across the school to intentionally structure their focus on particular strategies to leverage the greatest impact on student achievement in ELA, and the school has since adopted the *6+ 1 Traits of Writing*.
- Teachers benefit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths, strategies, and resources with one another through their professional collaborations. For example, one teacher provided a professional learning experience to nurture the premise of engaging students using ideas culled from the research of Phillip Schlechty, such as exploring methods for having silent discussions about important issues, paired reading strategies, such as "Say Something," and gauging students' perceptions of their own classroom engagement.
- During teacher team meetings, teachers upload their curriculum documents and performance data in Googledocs and analyze class data, and engage in discussions about gap analysis from interim assessments to determine trends and patterns across the school. Additionally, teachers ensure common curriculum and instructional expectations improve teaching and attend to the varied needs of students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Rubrics and assessments are evident across classrooms and students are provided with actionable feedback. Although teachers gauge students understanding during instruction and provide opportunities for students to self-assess, learners are not always aware of next learning steps in all subject areas.

Impact

As a result of the school's assessment practices, there are missed opportunities for all students to master skills in all content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms in the upper grades, students monitor their learning, determine when they need assistance, and are able to connect their current thinking to the learning target and demonstrate mastery of concepts and performance. For example, in a third grade class, students were provided checklists to assist them in response to text-dependent questions. Similarly, in a fourth grade class, students were encouraged to reflect on their writing by indicating what they were most proud of, identifying areas of struggle, and pinpointing their next steps. However, these examples of students' self-assessment practices are not yet evident across every grade.
- Across grades and content areas, teachers' feedback was actionable and included next steps for writers. For example, one teacher wrote, "Your writing has a strong introduction and conclusion; your evidence supports your ideas. Next step: Revisit your second paragraph and fix your organization." Another commented, "You had some great examples and provided a good analysis of the text. However, I would like us to work on developing the topic more so that readers can build background information on what is happening." Other comments, such as "Great job! Begin to work on adding to the story" do not ensure that students are fully aware of their next learning steps.
- In a fifth grade class, students were given peer critiques on which they praised, asked questions, and made suggestions for their classmates. One student wrote to her classmate, "I suggest you add a little voice and dialogue." However, this peer-to-peer dialogue was not evident in all grades.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, link the instructional shifts, and emphasize rigorous academic tasks and higher-order skills.

Impact

The school's purposeful work with curricula has led to all learners engaging in rigorous skills and habits necessary for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- This year, with a greater emphasis on high-quality writing as necessitated by the Common Core Learning Standards, teachers have enhanced the curricula by implementing the 6+1 Trait Writing Model of Instruction and Assessment, replete with sets of rubrics that are used to assess the quality of student writing and tailor instruction to students' needs. The school's focus on voice, organization, ideas, presentation, conventions, sentence fluency, and word choice promotes coherence and supports the school's vision for high-quality writing.
- To foster a deep conceptual understanding of essential mathematical ideas and supplement the K-2 *GO Math!* and 3-5 Math Modules from EngageNY, teachers across the school engage all students in rigorous habits and higher-order skills, such as simulated real-life investigations, mini-lessons, and other contexts for learning that support mathematical inquiry school-wide. In addition, documents reviewed included rubrics for solving math problems, and teacher-created Problem Solving Checklist, titled CRAW, with reference to Concrete Representational, Abstract, and Writing.
- The school uses Rubicon Atlas, a web-based, customizable curriculum management tool that enables teachers to review curricula documents that they have created, share essential questions, domain-specific vocabulary, specific skills and strategies, ensures transparency and coherency in an accessible venue and enables teachers to evaluate and revise their planning documents.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching strategies, including questioning and discussion techniques, foster consistent engagement with rigorous tasks, appropriately challenging activities, and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate higher order thinking.

Impact

As a result, all learners are engaged in suitably challenging tasks and exhibit high levels of thinking, participation, and meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers employ questions and tasks that are text specific and reflect the standards, such as citing evidence and examples from the text and using context clues to figure out the meaning of unknown words. For example, in a third grade math class, the teacher used differently shaped containers to compare capacities of liquid volume using liters and milliliters, thereby challenging the students' higher order thinking skills and understanding of math vocabulary.
- Across classrooms, teachers required students to use evidence from the text to demonstrate understanding and to support their ideas. For example, in a fourth grade class, the students were in databased groups using texts, such as *Celebrating Food and Family*, *Gandhi*, *Thomas Jefferson*, and *Bill of Rights*, respectively, which served to meet the needs of struggling, on level, and tiers of advanced learners. Students' written work demonstrated an understanding of democracy, peace, unity, and equality. In addition, student work products reflected concrete details, quotations, and domain-specific vocabulary related to democracy, peace, unity, and equality.
- In a fifth grade class, while students were working on identifying and categorizing passages from *Esperanza Rising*, related to their class study of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in preparation for writing their own Readers' Theater scripts, the teacher modeled thinking about how to categorize specific passages, such as "Everyone has the right to adequate food, clothing, housing and medical care, regardless of circumstances beyond his/her control."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school consistently communicates high expectations and provides effective feedback, support, and guidance to families and students.

Impact

As a result, families have a well-defined understanding of their role in supporting the school's expectations for student progress as well as projections for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents reported that teachers provide timely, intermittent feedback that includes next steps and valuable ideas and resources. Parents are equipped with tools to bolster their child's progress toward rigorous expectations.
- In addition to Tuesday afternoons, which are designated for parent engagement, teachers avail themselves to parents through a multitude of ways, including emails, phone calls, texts, and notes.
- The Bell Bugle, a web-based version of the school's newspaper created for the students, by the students, which is accessible via the global address <http://bellbugle.ps205.org>, includes, book and movie reviews, sports information, and other curricula resources, such as poetry collections. In addition, the principal sends home monthly parent newsletters and uses School Messenger to complement its outreach efforts and engage families in school-wide events that affect students' academic success.
- Field trip excursions are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Fourth and fifth grade trips to the Queens Botanical Garden and the United Nations support the Expeditionary Learning Module on Native Americans and Human Rights, respectively. Access to such cultural and educational institutions offers opportunities for students to observe the workplace and listen to presentations by professionals about their work and careers, which promotes college and career readiness.