Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

# 2014-2015

**Louis Desario**

**Elementary School 056**

**250 Kramer Avenue**
**Staten Island**
**NY 10309**

**Principal: Dean Scali**

**Date of review: December 12, 2014**
**Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio**

# The School Context

The Louis Desario School is an elementary school with 697 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 12% Hispanic, 81% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 13% 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 93.0%.

# School Quality Criteria

| **Instructional Core** | | |
|---|---|---|
| *To what extent does the school…* | **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** | **Developing** |
| 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** | **Developing** |
| **School Culture** | | |
| *To what extent does the school…* | **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 | **Celebration** | **Proficient** |
| **Systems for Improvement** | | |
| *To what extent does the school…* | **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 | **Additional Findings** | **Proficient** |

# Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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**Findings**
School leadership communicates their expectations to staff, students, and their families, through teacher feedback, parent engagement trainings, and other structures.

**Impact**
School wide systems of accountability and ongoing feedback to all constituents are leading to improvement of student work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The Daily Buzz, ongoing memorandum on school policy for instruction, and emails, provide staff members with expectations from school leadership. Additionally, during an interview, teachers stated that weekly grade meetings, a policy folder held in the office, and a 'Welcome Back' packet, provide information on the expectations from school leadership.

- Feedback from observations conveys strengths and areas of focus for teachers to use towards next steps. For example, as reflected in several evaluator observation feedback reports, there is an emphasis on the Instructional Shifts, such as academic vocabulary. This is in alignment with the school's instructional focus.

- The school website, student/parent handbook, and notices, provide parents with information on upcoming events, including insight into Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, ongoing memorandums to staff provide school policy relative to family engagement. For example, the handbook provides a detailed outline for homework and the expectations of family sign-off on assignments. Parents have access to 'Show Me' videos which provide them explicit explanations on math concepts taught in school so that they can reinforce them at home. Parents interviewed stated teachers call home and use Dojo, a texting tool, to provide them with information on how their children are performing in school.

- Workshops in literacy provide parents with expectations in reading and writing related to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, during recent parent engagement times, parents of kindergarten students attended workshops related to 'Falling in Love with Reading' that provided information on key standards towards college and career readiness.

## Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**
Although there are school wide assessments, including rubrics, conferences as ongoing checks for understanding, and student self-assessment, all related to the curricula, students' understanding of next steps is uneven.

**Impact**
The use of assessments does not yet lead to actionable next steps so that students know what they need to do to improve. Limited in-the-moment adjustments to instruction preclude meeting all students' needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During the student interview, most students were able to discuss the purpose of a rubric and share areas on which to focus, based on how they were graded. For example, one student stated that he uses it before writing "to look for the '4' and what you need to improve on to get a good grade". Another student stated, "I use the rubric to check over my work and add what I need to get a '4'. However, a review of student responses using rubrics, and work products, indicated that several students were not able to articulate accurate next steps. For example, during the interview, three students reviewed their tasks and were unable to clearly articulate next steps as a result of the feedback provided to them.

- A review of several pieces of student work, rubrics, and assessments, reflected the use of mismatched rubrics from teachers. During the review of work products and rubrics, students were provided feedback or asked to reflect upon a set of rubrics that did not match their ability level. For example, one piece was provided with a self-reflection from the student accompanied with a grade-wide kindergarten checklist. Although the student was able to articulate what their next steps were on their self-reflection sheet based off the rubric provided by the teacher, the checklist was not appropriate based on her writing ability level, which asked her to only label pictures even though the student was capable of writing complete sentences.

- During classroom visits, teachers were conducting conferences and used questioning strategies to obtain information on student understanding. For example, in one class, the teacher used a 'Share and Show' from Go Math to record student responses during the classroom lesson, and broke the class into groups based on student results, providing different tasks for each group. However, across several classes, adjustments to instruction were limited to coaching prompts without revisiting the concept taught, thus not focusing in on and meeting student learning needs.

# Additional Findings

| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Proficient |
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**Findings**
The school utilizes a curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and makes refinements to strategies so that all students have access.

**Impact**
Planning for engagement and instructional coherence across the curricula using student data is consistent across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school uses ReadyGen and GoMath from grades kindergarten to 5, curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). A review of pacing calendars indicates that the school integrates fiction and nonfiction into the English language arts curriculum. For example, the planning scope for grade 1 reflects both narrative and expository projects throughout the year.

- Training on close reading to integrate text complexity was provided this year by lead teachers and has influenced lesson plans and tasks. A review of several lesson plans indicates a close reading focus where students are required to read the text twice with a different emphasis each time, highlight areas of importance, and review texts once again to look for text-based evidence to answer questions.

- The school's decision to integrate academic vocabulary as an instructional shift is reflected in curricula. This year teacher teams developed grade appropriate vocabulary lists and the use of these words was evident in lesson plans and classroom word walls. For example, words such as announced and everything were reflected in a first grade plan, where in fifth grade, the word classify was integrated into a lesson.

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**
Across classrooms teacher practices included questioning and scaffolds, but entry points and student discussion was uneven.

**Impact**
Tasks, student work, and classroom discussions, are in the process of engaging students in demonstrating higher-order thinking.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers across classrooms were observed using a variety of questioning strategies to support student thinking. For example, in one fifth grade class, the teacher, after reading a text aloud, asked students to develop an image in their mind by using questions such as “Why would someone do that?” and “What is the mood of this story?”. Students responded with high-level responses such as, “It provides a feeling of being trapped.” However, this level of student response and teacher support was not evident across classrooms.

- Levels of student-to-student discussion were inconsistent. In one first grade class, students were provided with a talk protocol for discussion and students took a lead to ensure conversations were run well. However, this level of student discussion was not evident in most classes as teacher directed questioning and limited discussion were mostly prevalent.

- Some classes provided appropriate teaching support to engage student subgroups. For example, in one math class, students were assigned to groups and given a task to complete. One group was provided a visual support, while the other group was provided manipulatives along with a modeled demonstration by the teacher. This level of support for student subgroups was limited to only some classrooms.

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Proficient |
|---|---|---|---|

**Findings**
Teacher teams are engaged in teacher-led structured, inquiry based professional collaborations and there are opportunities for staff input into instructional decisions.

**Impact**
Improved instructional capacity leads to enhanced opportunities for teachers to ensure decisions to meet student learning needs are integrated across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including agendas, Looking at Student Work (LASW) protocol, written summaries, and supplemental materials, to support progress. The focus of these meetings encompasses an integration of the school goals around close reading, differentiation, and using academic vocabulary, as well as the improvement of curricula reflected in lesson plans.

- During a teacher team meeting, teachers used student work, and a LASW reflection protocol to determine next steps for teaching practices. For example, as a next step, the presenting teacher was offered suggestions to improve the quality of student writing such as the INFO acronym (introduction, name three facts, find text based evidence and offer a conclusion). The teacher making the recommendation stated this improved the quality of written responses in her class and shared with the team student pre- and post-task activities to show growth after using the strategy.

- The instructional team meets to determine the professional development focus and work on special instructional projects. For example, this year, lead teachers stated that their colleagues would like more support in the area of close reading as it is an instructional focus. As a result, more professional development was provided. During a team interview, teachers reported that lead classrooms have opened up for their colleagues to visit and support in the area of close reading is helpful.