



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Crotona Park West

Elementary-Middle School X004

**1701 Fulton Street
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Vincent Resto

**Date of review: February 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Amanda Lurie**

The School Context

Crotona Park West is an elementary-middle school with 507 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 53% Black, 45% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 21% 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 89.0%.

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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers are engaged in structured, collaborative professional learning communities. Teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment, and student work.

Impact

Well-structured inquiry and investigative collaborations establish school-wide instructional coherence, increased learning for all students, and shared improvements in teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers have between 11 and 13 periods a week, which are used for department meetings, inquiry work across grade levels, and common planning time with co-teachers. Teachers use this time to update lesson and unit plans, refine tasks to engage all learners, modify lesson plans and create scaffolds within those plans for students with disabilities and English language learners, and tier all materials and lesson plans for struggling and advanced learners. Teachers also use this time to review assessment data and make strategic decisions around re-teaching sections of the unit. For example, in the teacher team meeting observed, English Language Arts (ELA) teachers compared writing samples and made decisions as to whether the current unit taught needed modifications based on student work.
- All teachers are engaged in a highly structured, peer-created inter-visitation protocol that they use to visit colleagues across grades and subject areas. While the protocol is structured, teachers report that they create their own visitation schedules, have complete buy-in, and self-monitor their inter-visitations. Teachers also reported that all classrooms are open to visits from a colleague, at all times of the day, and that it is common practice for a colleague to just “pop in” for an inter-visitation.
- Teachers use a wide variety of data and student work to make strategic decisions around the delivery of instruction. For example, in a middle school ELA department meeting, teachers were comparing samples of tier one, two, and three student writing samples, from a unit on narrative writing, using a protocol that they created at the beginning of the year. The purpose of the review was to decide if they needed to refine the unit, reteach parts of the unit, or move to the next unit. Teachers were able to pinpoint specific skill gaps in the use of descriptive and transition words and sentence structure, to come up with “next steps”, and planned to modify the unit for the future.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teacher pedagogy reflects a belief in high cognitive student engagement, student choice, and independence.

Impact

While a majority of classrooms have strong pedagogical practices, there are still some classrooms that have inconsistent practice around extensions for advanced learners. As a result, high levels of thinking and ownership for some students are not evident in all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In a middle school social studies class, the teacher asked students to cite evidence and back up their opinions in who bore responsibility for the Triangle Shirt Waist fire deaths. His questions were consistently level two and three on the Depth of Knowledge Scale, his wait time was appropriate, and he had students responding to each other's answers, and asking each other questions. This was the case for a vast majority of classrooms observed, however, in a middle school ELA class, a teacher asked basic recall questions, using a "rapid fire" technique that only served to confuse students. There was minimal student discussion, mostly limited to choral or one-phase responses.
- While every lesson, and every classroom visited had evidence of multiple entry points, and tiered lessons and materials, choice and extensions for more advanced learners were not always observed. The "tier one" lessons and materials observed, while differentiated and more challenging, did not always ensure that students were on task. For example, in a lesson on Booker T. Washington, tier one readers had a more challenging reading selection and questions, but many students still appeared to not be fully engaged. Several spent their time reading aloud to other students, and helping them with their work, but had little materials or choice to push their own thinking and form their own questions and connections. Conversely, students with disabilities and English Language Learners seemed to benefit from the modified materials, and support from more advanced learners in their classes. For example, a "tier three", English language learner was paired with a "tier one" learner, who was explaining examples in Spanish of what the text was trying to convey. The student appeared to understand the text more clearly, after this intervention by her peer.
- Across classrooms students working at stations, or working in groups, interacted with peers to share thinking and work through tasks together. In some instances, however, when students were hesitant about responding teachers jumped in at an early juncture to support students prompting students to look to teachers, rather than themselves as the "gatekeeper" of information.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school's curricula consistently emphasizes use of engaging, rigorous higher-order thinking tasks. Planned modifications based on analysis of student work include extensive use of scaffolds.

Impact

Careful data analysis and planning provides all students access to cognitively engaging academic tasks that emphasize higher order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of unit and lesson plans, and evidence from the classroom visits revealed that embedded tasks within the units are Common Core aligned, differentiated, inquiry-based, and promote higher order thinking skills. For example, in a sixth grade math class, the students had to master the order of operations, based upon a mathematical expression. The teacher had several tiered expressions and word problems for students to work on. Students engaged in solving the expressions in multiple ways, showed their thinking, and used mathematical reasoning and mathematical vocabulary. Students asked their peers questions and explained to peers the different ways they solved their own math expressions throughout the lesson.
- The school has tiered all materials and lessons into a three-tiered system, to support a wide variety of learners. Materials and lessons are tiered to support both advanced and struggling learners. Most classrooms visited, and every unit and lesson plan viewed, reflected planning and execution of lessons with scaffolded materials, multiple entry points, and student choice. For example, a social studies unit, included differentiated materials with modified text, and a choice of "mini projects" that students could complete.
- In the pre-kindergarten class visited, the theme for the lesson was winter. The classroom was set up into several learning stations, based on that theme, where students were fully engaged, "playing" and having fun as they went from station to station participating in structured activities that gave them choice. One station had clothing that was labeled with the name of the item, where students could play "dress up". Another station had many pre-K level books on winter. There was an art station where students could draw a picture of winter. In the play kitchen, students could "pretend cook" a winter meal.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine and drive progress. Across classrooms teachers employ consistent checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

Teachers have data to make targeted assessment decisions and curricula adjustments that improve academic student outcomes for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has moved to a conferencing model. Teachers use daily conferences with students to provide individualized feedback. The majority of classrooms reviewed, revealed that teachers are engaging in reading conferences to record and analyze student progress. Conferencing notes were extensive, measurable, and had “next steps”.
- The school strategically uses data, which is reviewed in teacher teams, to organize “reteach” days at the end of a unit, for skills that were not mastered.
- The school uses uniform rubrics in all subjects. A review of the rubrics and the student work that accompanied them revealed rubrics that emphasized the mechanics of writing, as well as pushed students to think, cite evidence, and look at the quality of evidence. For example, writing rubrics include categories on how to express ideas clearly through evidence and details, as well as categories on spelling, grammar, and syntax.
- In the student interview portion of the day, students described clearly how they are assessed. Most could articulate why they received a certain grade and how they could improve. Student work samples had extensive written teacher feedback, such as “Could you include more evidence to make this point stronger?” or “Use more descriptive words here as you did in your second paragraph.”
- In all classrooms observed, teachers stopped at several junctures within the lesson to do informal checks for understanding. Most of these checks were in the form of conferencing, a “stop and jot” or a “turn and talk”.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has systems in place to communicate high expectations to families in regard to college and career pathways. The school provides students with detailed feedback and advisement supports.

Impact

Families understand their children’s progress toward achieving set expectations for higher learning. Members of the school community feel supported in achieving those expectations and school staff are committed to offering ongoing advisement that prepares students for their next educational steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school supports a high percentage of students in temporary housing. Upon meeting with the parent group, many of who self-identified as living in temporary housing, parents communicated feeling welcome by the school. Parents discussed the various opportunities that the school has created to support them. Classes for adult English language learners, General Equivalency Diploma classes, workshops on the math, ELA, and Common Core, and community events for parents, such as coat drives, and pot luck dinners are a part of creating a welcoming and inclusive environment. The school has also established a monthly parent newsletter with a list of events, and information on the academic, social and behavioral expectations of the school that are connected to a path to college and career.
- Parents reported that the school’s online systems are helping them understand, in real time, how children are progressing. The school has also developed a system called “Tell All, Be All” where post cards are sent to parents highlighting student success stories. The school provides extensive progress reports every four weeks for every child.
- The school has established “middle school ambassadors” who are a part of the school’s advisory and leadership team. The ambassadors not only serve as a student government, but they work with students from younger grades as mentors and buddies. Both parents and students report that the ambassador system promotes leadership, and has resulted in improved student behavior and outcomes.