



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Senator John D. Calandra Elementary School**

**Elementary School X014**

**3041 Bruckner Boulevard  
Bronx  
NY 10461**

**Principal: Ira Schulman**

**Date of review: April 29, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Socorro Diaz**

## The School Context

The Senator John D. Calandra Elementary School is an elementary school with 623 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 6% Black, 63% Hispanic, 29% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 23% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

## 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>Focus</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>Additional Findings</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>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> |
|---------------------------|---|----------------|-----------------------|

### Findings

Teacher teams provide a data-based rationale and analysis of student work that inform their decisions to adjust teacher practice and create strategic goals for groups of students. Distributed leadership is embedded in the school structure so that teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

### Impact

Structured professional teams have strengthened teacher abilities resulting in progress toward goals for groups of students. School wide structures and decisions to improve teacher practices and student learning are developed using teacher input.

### Supporting Evidence

- Grade level teams meet weekly for an hour and their main focus of teamwork is the analysis of student data via inquiry cycles to develop instructional strategies that support student learning. For example, modeling during the beginning of the lessons and scaffolding new vocabulary that students will encounter in text. Teachers state that feedback from colleagues about their planned questioning strategies and specific suggestions for making adjustments to tasks such as changing the pacing of learning targets has enabled them to make necessary shifts to support student learning. Teachers support one another in best practices using a Peer Coaching and Learning Model where they share effective teaching strategies during classroom inter-visitations.
- The effective use of the Scholar Work Analysis Protocol by teacher teams has elevated teacher capacity to define student's learning needs and make necessary instructional adjustments. During one team meeting, teachers spent time discussing a student's profile, which provided context for the student's readiness including previous assessment information and pertinent data such as language proficiency, scores on DRP, and Performance Series assessments. Teachers then use this to determine next learning steps for the student and apply instructional adjustments for other learners as appropriate.
- The leadership/instructional team has made organizational decisions to allow teacher teams to engage in the school's decision making. Each grade team has a teacher team leader who is also a member of the school's instructional team. In addition, two peer coaches, and two lead teachers in both literacy and mathematics, play essential roles in the schools' decision making about teaching and learning. For example, teachers developed school wide criteria and rubrics for the meaningfulness of displays of student work. Teams of teachers also worked on task specific rubrics together and shared specific scaffolds and strategies to support particular learners, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). This collaboration increases school wide coherence of learning expectations and teacher accountability for the progress of students they share.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Although the school ensures that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts, there is a need to build coherence across all grades and subjects with the different curriculum used at the school. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks.

### Impact

Critical thinking order skills and academic tasks are embedded into the curriculum so that all students are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school is in its second year of implementation of common core aligned curriculum Core Knowledge Literacy Program in grades K-2; in grades 3-5 the school uses Teachers College Reading and Writing Units of Study. This year the school began to expand the Core Knowledge curriculum as a pilot in grades 3 and 4. Teacher teams have begun to build coherence across grades in looking and reviewing common trends between both curriculums. Go Math is used across all grades at the school. The chapters and sequence of instruction for Go Math have been aligned to the New York State Mathematics suggested curriculum map using instructional shift 5, real world project based math tasks and applications.
- Teachers emphasize higher order thinking skills using DOK and Bloom's Taxonomy. Essential questions/key ideas are developed for each unit of study to formulate higher order questioning that are used in lesson planning to support students understanding. For example, in a grade 5 lesson on finding the prime factors of a given number, students were asked to determine the factorization for the number 210 using these questions as a guide to their discussion: "What is the first question we ask ourselves when we are creating a factor tree?" "Can anyone name two factors that equal 210?" "How can we represent these repeated factors using exponents?" "Why do mathematicians create factor trees?"
- Writing is embedded throughout curriculum maps and rigorous tasks are consistently promoted across curricula. For example, in a grade 1 English language arts (ELA) lesson, students were asked to use three examples of textual evidence to support a claim.
- Rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills including use of textual evidence with compare and contrast, numeracy, multi-step word problems and adaptations for ELLs and SWDs were noted on most maps. Most lesson plans reviewed contained an ESL/special education lesson modification literacy checklist to support students understanding and engagement.

## Additional Findings

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies and scaffolds consistently provide multiple entry points into all curricula.

### Impact

All students, including ELLs and SWDs have access to appropriately challenging tasks. Students demonstrate higher order thinking skills in student work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms there is a common belief that students learn best through small group instruction with supports and scaffolds where students are engaged in critical thinking and discussions. The school implements the workshop model to deliver instruction using a variety of teaching techniques informed by the Universal Designed for Learning and instructional tools such as visual aids, auditory, tactile, conferencing, small group, and reflective learning to reinforce leaning. In most classroom visits, student supports were evident throughout the lessons. For example, in a grade 5 ELA class, students were learning about elements of poetry. The lesson began activating student prior-knowledge by completing a poetry pre-assessment. Then students were grouped based on their Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) levels and they were asked to read “*April Rain Song*” by Langston Hughes and turn and talk to discuss elements of the poetry in the poem.
- Classroom visits had teaching points that conveyed standards-aligned instructional goals for the lesson and student discussion reflected levels of student thinking and participation. Questioning strategies were evident in most classrooms visited. For example, in a grade 2 non-fiction reading class students were identifying the life cycle of a plant. Using the Dice Protocol students worked at their tables taking turns rolling the dice answering these questions, “What does the term cycle mean? What is the first thing that happens in the cycle? What happens after the seed is planted?”
- In 4 out of the 7 classrooms visited, students worked on different assignments using various materials and resources. For example, in a grade 5 math class, students were learning about finding the prime factor of a given number and they were divided into three groups during their exploration time; one group was guided by the teacher, another group was working on a buddy activity and a last group was working independently in creating their own factor tree for each given number. In another class in grade 3 in contrast, students were seated in groups and worked on different graphic organizers; yet, the organizers required the students to exhibit the same skill of comparing and contrasting.

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

### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

### **Impact**

The school provides actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Results from common assessments data are used to adjust curricular and instruction.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams monitor and analyze student progress through common assessments including Go Math baseline, mid-year and end-year assessments; multiple forms of unit and monthly assessments in math and English language arts; MOSL assessments; checklists and vocabulary assessments and writing rubrics aligned to Common Core to include next steps for student achievement. This information, along with Developmental Reading Assessment 2 data, is used to determine intervention academic services for small groups and enrichment services for entitled students.
- The school uses a variety assessment tracking and progress, monitoring student learning. Student achievement data is used to track student progress and mastery of grade level goals through a school-wide grading policy and a student summary sheet, "Blue Sheet-Week in Review". Students across all grades receive a weekly summary sheet to include learnings, next steps and a self-reflection on what was learned and areas for growth. Parents receive this information weekly and they can call the school and meet with teachers for follow up questions or additional support.
- Teacher teams use student achievement data to modify assessments. Inquiry teams identify achievement gaps, plan interventions, progress monitor and adjust instruction. School increased real world's applications across the content areas to improve student learning based on their last assessment data results. For example, a grade 5 "Check Book" project focused on 5.NBT.7 adding and subtracting decimals show a 10% increase of this strand in the results of the chapter unit. Students experienced balancing a bank checking account during the instructional activities planned during this unit.

|                           |                              |                |                       |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>3.4 High Expectations</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|

### **Findings**

The school leader effectively communicates high expectations to the entire school community and effectively partners with staff, parent and students providing meaningful feedback and guidance to ensure students' educational learning experiences prepare them for the next level.

### **Impact**

Structures that support the schools high expectations build systems of accountability for student academic, social and emotional behavior. Staff and school leaders offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The principal sets high expectations through pre- and post-observations, grade and teacher level meetings and professional learning opportunities. All professional learning sessions are collaboratively designed by the Professional Learning Committee based on Advance data. In addition, school-wide teams including School Leadership Team, School Intervention Team, Vertical Teams, Safety Committee and the UFT Consultation Team communicate high expectations across the school to entire staff through school wide meetings and feedback conversations.
- The child study team provides guidance for classroom teachers for at-risk students. The school has created the "Wolf Pack Pride Program" which includes daily Positive Award Winners (PAWs) to reinforce positive behaviors. The school uses "Second Step", a social/emotional education program weekly on Monday mornings across all grades. Second Step promotes school success, empathy, school connectedness and safe and respectful school climate. Monthly PAW Award Assemblies to recognize hard work, academic achievement and attendance are conducted to celebrate students and their families. In addition, the school is piloting a program, "Classroom Dojo" an online program to support parents and families in developing positive strategies to improve students' behavior management and study skills. Students feel safe at the school and they enjoy getting PAWs from their classroom teachers and their principal in recognition of their positive behavior.
- Parents say they receive numerous communications about their children's progress via emails, phone calls, and progress reports. They indicate that the staff is always available to assist them with any aspect of their children's school life and provide support for larger family issues in times of need. For example, every Friday families receive the "Blue Sheet-Week in Review" which offers a summary of the learning for the week with data assessments and next steps for individual students across all grades. This system supports students' instructional goals and awareness to identify strengths and areas of needs in moving to the next level.