



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**John Peter Zenger**

**Elementary School X018**

**502 Morris Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10451**

**Principal: Lauren Sewell-Walker**

**Date of review: February 27, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres**

## The School Context

John Peter Zenger is an elementary school with 574 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 29% Black, 66% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% American Indian/Other Pacific Islander students. The student body includes 26% English language learners and 11% 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 90.0%.

## 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>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>Focus</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>Proficient</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Teachers engage in structured collaborations analyzing student work and assessments that build leadership and capacity to improve student achievement.

### Impact

The established protocols and practices during teacher team collaborations enhance leadership structures that promote teacher voice in key decisions leading to improved instruction and student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work collaboratively in horizontal and vertical planning sessions. Grade leaders facilitate meetings where all participants have a voice in key decision-making. Agendas and minutes accompanied by protocol formats ensure effective running of meetings focused on agreed-upon topics that enhance classroom teaching and learning. As teachers analyze data and look at student work, they take turns sharing high-level observations resulting in the modification of their lessons, units of study, and pacing calendar. All participants provide cool and warm feedback and discuss next steps, which are taken into consideration to plan Common Core aligned lessons and performance tasks. Vertical teams study groups of students and individual student's performance to determine and investigate trends. The team was observed discussing student voice in writing based on student work samples. The team's work has uncovered grade-wide trends, helped colleagues understand individual student performance along a continuum, and influenced school-wide instructional decisions in improving students' use of text-based evidence in their writing.
- Professional conversations amongst teachers have deepened due to the research-based interactions as they delve into specific topics from selected professional books that assist them through their learning journey as a community of learners. Teachers explained how their collaboration and inter-visitations have helped them to create a balanced view between theory and practice as they engage in meaningful discussions about their experiences and of next steps they will take to improve their craft. The ability to capture learning gaps as they learn together creates a sense of empowerment as team members advance in the development of their pedagogy. In particular, teachers cite improvements in collection of data through one-on-one student conferencing, data collection tools, as well as data analysis skills which have informed small group differentiated strategy instruction as well as Response to Intervention (RTI) support of targeted students
- Teachers value the structured weekly collaborations noting that those meetings occur in a risk-free environment where they give and receive input to and from colleagues. Furthermore, they attribute the continuous inquiry cycle and their analysis of weekly data derived from exit slips or "quick-checks" in helping them decipher which targeted and tiered interventions they can resort to with the assistance of other resourceful individuals to support student academic advancement. Additionally, teams revisit topics from Monday professional development sessions during meetings to discuss skills for implementation in the classroom and present outcomes of work from past sessions.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Small group instruction focused on real-world experience and use of multiple entry points into curricula are at the core of school-wide beliefs on how students learn best. While these evidentiary features are consistent from classroom to classroom, students with disabilities are in need of more granular support.

### Impact

The variety of scaffolds tied into experiential learning in small group instructional groupings leads to improved instructional outcomes for most students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers present essential and/or open-ended questions within lessons that require students to reflect on their learning as it relates to the world around them and to turn and talk and engage in high-level discussions with their peers in partnerships and small groups. Teachers model strategies by thinking aloud. For example, the school-wide focus on guided reading provides students with an intentional and explicit instructional support based on the identified needs of individual students.
- Lessons are designed with practices aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and integrated instructional shifts to promote student engagement and students' ability to be thoughtful and skillful in expressing their thinking. Teachers provide students a variety of scaffolds such as graphic organizers, interactive charts, and visual aids for comprehending academic vocabulary and employ strategies such as hands-on experiential learning activities and peer-to-peer reviews to support students' access to curricula. Students explained how the lessons, questions, and tasks have become more difficult and how important it is to "show what they know".
- Teachers are cognizant of the importance of integrating scaffolds for supporting a diversity of learners. They share graphic organizers with sentence starters that serve as support for English language learners and students with disabilities. Anchor charts in classrooms and model writing pieces are created as interactive resources for students to refer to during performance tasks that require high-level thinking and discussions. For example, in a bilingual class, the teacher provided a variety of word problems in math based on students' entry points. Although teachers create similar multiple entry points for students with disabilities, those entry points are not always strategically planned. For example, while bilingual and special education students had math word problems with strategy guides to assist them in independent problem-solving, they required intensive support to navigate the vocabulary within the word problems as their vocabulary knowledge base was not considered in planning for entry points.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and provide training to support the achievement of those expectations. Teachers and school leaders encourage a pathway to college and careers through ongoing communication with parents and through ongoing feedback and guidance to students.

### Impact

Faculty, families, and students are supported in understanding expectations connected to college and career readiness so that students have the assistance they need to be prepared for their next level of education.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and teams consistently communicate a high level of expectations aligned to the school-wide instructional vision and mission. This vision is constantly reviewed through family newsletters, monthly calendars, and weekly interactions with parents. The ongoing feedback provided by teachers and school leaders helps families understand that the education of their children is of utmost importance to the school community. The menu of activities the school organizes on a weekly basis sends a message of the significant impact parent engagement has in children's lives. For example, being part of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Community Project, families receive informational flyers on activities that they can participate in with their children such as cooking and exercise classes, as well as symposiums on how they can contribute to their children's readiness for college and career. Additionally, teachers send out school-designed progress reports to families after each benchmark period to ensure that parents have timely updates on their children's progress towards academic goals.
- Professional development reflects school-wide needs and instructional goals for improving student outcomes by guiding the work to refine teacher craft in customizing students' learning experiences. Leaders make it known that they expect to see the footprints of professional development in classrooms as they conduct their walkthroughs and do lesson observations. In turn, teachers tailor their lessons to ensure that needs of individual students are met with the understanding that they are being held accountable to high standards as they prepare for the next step and beyond.
- The school has a partnership with high school students who serve as role models and mentors to students after school so that students can learn firsthand the opportunities that await them as they continue to move to future grades. During these weekly meeting sessions, students discuss real-world topics such as bullying and self-confidence that help them grow not only academically, but also social emotionally as well. Students expressed appreciation that high school students give up their time to serve as role models for them and are patient with them without losing sight of how they learn through trial and error.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teachers and students use assessments and rubrics to analyze student progress. Teachers regularly conduct checks for understanding and students regularly self assess.

### Impact

Formative assessments provide a holistic picture of student achievement and academic needs for both students and teachers. Daily assessment practices conducted by both teachers and students lead to effective adjustments and the infusion of needed strategies to support student progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers expect students, within groups, to give feedback to and receive feedback from peers through the use of checklists. Students articulated how the self-assessment checklist and peer feedback help them improve their work. Teachers listen in during students' discussions and then work with students to agree on goals and/or next steps on the areas in need of focus. The results of these conversations are also recorded on the school-designed progress reports distributed to families after each benchmark period.
- As students engage in independent writing tasks, they use a color-coded system with plastic cups, which allows them to assess their progress and inform teachers where they are within the task. Students explained that this strategy has helped them to monitor their own progress. Additionally, students spoke about peer-to-peer assessment and support, saying that they have become "better learners" because of their peers. This community learning amongst students has strengthened both their collaborative skills and a shift towards independence and preparation for life. A fifth grader stated: "The work is challenging...This pushes us to pass the test and prepare for life."
- Teachers use exit slips or quick-checks and view student work during lessons, and frequently confer with students asking questions to assess and guide students, and make adjustments during lessons. During a special education class guided reading lesson, the teacher asked questions and then modified questions based on student responses to aid students' comprehension, thinking, and engagement.
- Teachers use a variety of assessments including Performance Based Assessments, Fountas and Pinnell, Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA2), rubrics, checklists, and ongoing teacher observations within lessons providing both them and students accurate feedback on student achievement. Teachers also use rubrics to help students define where they are and decide on strategies to follow for improvement. These assessments, besides assisting teachers to make key decisions on how to further support struggling students with tailored strategies aligned to their learning styles, have informed RTI work within the school.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

The school aligns all curricula to the Common Core and intentionally embeds the instructional shifts in developing rigorous learning experiences to promote college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

Purposeful curricula decisions build coherence within curricula so that students engage in cognitively challenging tasks that prepare them for college and careers.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school promotes higher order thinking skills through infusing high-level Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions within the lesson plans and units of study using Ready Gen as a resource in designing their own curricula. All curricula includes notation of Common Core Standards addressed and aligned performance tasks and assessments. Particularly, the school has focused on supporting instructional shifts through work on development of claim/counterclaim and text based evidence.
- All curricula units across grades include performance based assessments, customized peer assessments, rubrics, and graphic organizers. Additionally, in order to ensure coherence across grades, the instructional blocks have been modified so that content area instruction in science and social studies is rigorous with focused essential questions for cognitive engagement. Teacher shared how this focus has made them more mindful in curricula planning and in monitoring data to make needed curricula adjustments that promote favorable academic outcomes.
- Curricula across grades emphasizes activities that encourage students' higher order thinking. For example, fourth graders reading the *Birch Bark House* tackled the question "How can we describe the relationship between character's dialogue and actions?" Students worked independently at first, and then, conferring with peers in small groups, used checklists and a story chart to record data and to discuss and debate their findings before completing a written assignment to answer the question posed. In a science class, in response to the question, "How do animals interact with their environment?" students annotated text and used text based evidence to explain what a producer is within the food chain.