



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Williamsbridge School

Elementary-Middle School X089

**980 Mace Avenue
Bronx
NY 10469**

Principal: Ralph Martinez

**Date of review: March 31, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

The School Context

The Williamsbridge School is an elementary/middle school with 1,475 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 53% Hispanic, 23% Black, 17% White, 6% Asian and 1% Native American students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

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	Focus	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	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders' well-communicated high expectations for the level and quality of teacher professionalism, instruction, communication and other criteria related to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, are matched by effective teacher training opportunities. School leaders and teachers engage in meaningful partnerships with families to support students' progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers are supported in meeting school leaders' high expectations through many professional development opportunities, which demonstrates a culture of mutual accountability. Families feel well-supported by the school and are able to effectively support student progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are supported through various professional development structures, such as in-house coaching sessions and inter-visitations to other schools in the district. Professional development topics include digital portfolios, project-based learning, using on-line collaborative platforms, Common Core Learning Standards, learning centers in primary classrooms, facilitating student round-tables, using technology to enhance planning and student learning, facilitating student-centered classrooms, Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS), and personalized instruction. In addition the English language learner (ELL) department, the school has been selected to participate in a Spatial-Temporal math initiative. Through this program each student will have access to an iPad and teachers will receive training in how to facilitate and support computer-assisted visual-math lessons.
- During the parent meeting, parents expressed high-levels of satisfaction with the support that the faculty provides for students and families. Moreover, they discussed the opportunities for volunteerism in the school. Three participants stated that they are in the school every day from the beginning of the school day through the end of the after-school program. A parent stated that school leaders and teachers have embraced and supported her child, an ELL, as well as provided supports for her in assimilating into American culture and becoming more proficient in the English language. All communication that is sent to families is translated into Spanish and Albanian. Spanish, Albanian and Arabic language translators are available at every conference, meeting and parent workshop.
- Parents expressed that they take advantage of the opportunity to meet with teachers weekly to discuss student progress and seek clarification regarding curricular tasks. Through the Jupiter on-line grading system, students and parents are apprised of student progress. Alerts are dispatched to students and families to indicate declining grades, missed assignments, absences and behavior problems. The parent coordinator facilitates "coffee and conversation" sessions for parents every Friday morning. The school newspaper, which is published by students, is also a vehicle through which families receive information about curricula, and school wide trends and events.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects, the school is working to fully establish the comprehensive curricular planning that occurs in English language arts (ELA) and math within the content areas of social studies and science.

Impact

The planning and refinement of curricula and academic tasks using student work and data facilitate curricula access and cognitive engagement for a diversity of learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities. There is greater coherence in math and ELA due to the comprehensive curricular planning in those areas, and ongoing curricular and instructional refinement supports academic progress for all learners.

- The school uses Core Knowledge and GO Math! in kindergarten through 2nd grade, Expeditionary Learning and GO Math! in grades 3 through 5, and Expeditionary Learning and Connected Mathematics Project 3 in grades 6 through 8. Lessons are modified to meet the needs of ELLs and students with disabilities. Teachers share on-going curricular and instructional revisions through Google Drive and Dropbox, two cloud-based platforms for sharing electronic documents.
- At the beginning of every unit, teachers administer curriculum-based pre-assessments. Teacher teams analyze the data and plan, prioritize and emphasize skills and concepts as informed by the data. Based on the pre-assessment results teacher teams incorporate supplemental scaffolds to provide students greater access and increase student comprehension within the Common Core-aligned units of study. Unit modifications are captured on the Unit Adjustment Form and submitted to school leaders at least a week prior to the start of each unit.
- Teachers use the Depth of Knowledge scale to design high-order questions and high-level tasks as reflected in unit plans and lesson plans. All lesson planning includes Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies. As teachers consider potential barriers to comprehension for students with disabilities, they use the “Deriving UDL Solutions” template to plan and incorporate alternate learning modalities and scaffolds for each learning activity.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The Danielson Framework for Teaching informs the school's beliefs about how students learn best and guides the curricula-aligned instructional practices. Across classrooms, higher-order thinking skills are elicited through students' engagement in appropriately challenging tasks via multiple entry points.

Impact

Danielson-aligned teaching strategies and the provision of multiple entry points engage students in appropriately challenging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classes and grades, students work in cooperative groups to research, problem-solve and discuss focal topics. For example students in a 3rd grade class watched a video on the life cycle of frogs, engaged in collaborative groups to read articles of varying complexity on the topic and each engaged in a "jigsaw" share of the information that they gleaned.
- Elementary grade teachers implement the reciprocal reading strategy. Within this process students read texts on the same topic. Complexity levels of the texts vary to engage each student at his or her reading level. After the reading, students assume discussion roles such as predictor, clarifier, questioner and summarizer and engage in a collaborative discussion, with each student focusing on his or her specific role. Socratic seminar discussions were observed in middle school ELA classes. As students discussed essential questions and focal topics, they were held accountable to providing text-based evidence. High-level debates are also conducted within the middle school humanities classes.
- In a 6th grade class students read *The Lightning Thief* and engaged in collaborative group discussions with a focus on the high-level essential question, "How can we analyze the gods and mythological creatures, using their attributes?" The teacher provided a salient quote from the text and students engaged in "turn and talk" to discuss their text-based inferences. The teacher circulated to listen in, assess and push student thinking. Students then recorded their responses in their Expeditionary Learning workbooks.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the curricula.

Impact

The use of rubrics and common assessments facilitates actionable feedback for students and teachers, and informs curricular and instructional modifications.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the grades teachers use reciprocal teaching checklists and conference notes to gather, track and monitor student progress and provide next steps. Teachers provide immediate and actionable feedback that is linked to analysis of the data.
- Fountas and Pinnell running records are administered during three benchmark periods throughout the school year to assess student reading progress. Teachers administer running records more frequently in response to noted progress between benchmark administration periods. Teachers provide feedback to students regarding their reading progress. During the student meetings, students shared their current reading levels, as well as their reading goals.
- Across the grades teachers use Common Core-aligned curriculum-based and teacher-created rubrics to assess student proficiency in writing, math problem-solving and scientific inquiry. Students are provided with rubric-aligned feedback on assignments and self-assess based upon rubric criteria. The data team tracks rubric-based scores in Google Docs, a cloud-based platform to share electronic documents, in order to monitor trends in student progress.
- Analysis of school wide data trends informs curricula modifications. For example, as reported by school leaders, a comparative analysis of fall 2014 School net baseline data and spring 2015 performance-based assessment data revealed minimal growth in reading comprehension for ELLs and students with disabilities. As a result, teachers across the grades incorporate more visual learning strategies and UDL strategies into their lessons.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Instructional planning and curricular modification are facilitated through teacher team collaborations, and meeting structures allow for distributed leadership school-wide.

Impact

Teacher team meetings facilitate instructional modifications. Structures for distributed leadership enhance leadership capacity across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly to plan curriculum, share teaching strategies and discuss assessment-based data. Teachers utilize the “Looking at Student Work” protocol to gather information and inform revision of instructional units, lessons and tasks.
- During a 2nd grade teacher team meeting, team members used the Atlas Protocol to analyze student writing samples. In teams, teachers analyzed the samples with a focus on what the student was actually doing in the writing. Teachers described each student’s strengths and level of proficiency in the response-writing task. After discussing each student’s strengths, teachers discussed apparent areas of confusion or skill deficiency. Team members then discussed recommendations for next instructional steps. During the meeting, strategies for ELLs were shared for the focal students who were ELLs.
- Teachers shared that the school has a strong collaborative community. Teachers meet regularly in vertically aligned groups to discuss and revise curriculum across the grades. Teacher teams analyze “antecedent pathways” and “future pathways” in skill development to identify precursory skill deficits that impact student progress in higher grades. For example, through this analysis a deficit in using place value to round decimals to any place in grade 5 was traced back to using place value in basic addition and subtraction in the primary grades. This cross sectional analysis allows teacher teams to supplement instruction across the grades to ensure cumulative skill-building.
- The various roles and opportunities that facilitate distributed leadership are instructional coaches, grade-leaders, subject-area leaders, mentors, professional development and professional book study facilitators.