

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Seton Falls Elementary**

**Elementary School X111**

**3740 Baychester Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10466**

**Principal: Celina Gutierrez**

**Date of review: May 14, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

## The School Context

Seton Falls is an elementary school with 728 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 62% Black, 35% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 19% 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 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>Developing</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>Area of Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Developing</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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations and distributed leadership structures are in place.

### Impact

These collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers so that teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- Team captains meet with their teams to work on reciprocal reading and implementing other strategies learned in professional development, with coaches and consultants. A team captain stated, “Previously I had reciprocal reading experience and training so turn-keyed it to my team and we all help each other. It is a collegial team, and we learn from each other. We have seen growth in reading levels across the school and small group instruction.” Teachers stated they are able to contribute revisions to curricula and instruction and to professional development. The professional development committee is composed of teachers who design and deliver the sessions. During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared that collaborating has helped them grow as teachers as they learn from each other. Additionally, they spoke about the outside coaches and consultants who sit in on their meetings, helping to support curricular and instructional revisions, providing realistic and actionable next steps. Further, teachers spoke of intervisitations and learning walks, which have helped them learn about their own classes.
- In a teacher team meeting, teachers shared about their focus, “Some [teachers] want to keep on skill-drilling in math. We prefer to go deeper and give performance tasks so students show their knowledge of the instructional shifts.” Teachers explained that they are able to revise the curricula to meet their students’ needs. “We looked at ReadyGen and shifted the units and used them differently according to our students’ needs. For example we decided to start with Unit 5 and then Module B. We took the suggested text and made them more rigorous and to push students, make it more meaningful to them and make it connected to the real world.” This teacher team was the first to implement google.docs.
- Teachers stated that they have a say in selecting and revising curricula and instruction at the school. The principal explained how teachers are empowered to make decisions around curricula and teaching, and as a team reflected on the implementation and alignment of the Envisions math curriculum to support student growth and instructional shifts. The principal stated, “As a result, teachers recommended a change in program and implementation of the Citywide adopted Common Core-aligned curriculum Go Math. This school year, teacher teams adjusted the pacing and developed a curriculum map at a glance to support student achievement.” Teacher teams meet vertically, and make recommendations for coherence and for implementing a performance task component. The principal and teachers agree, “Performance tasks are a school-wide practice to promote higher-order thinking skills.”

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, teaching strategies, including questioning and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. The inconsistent multiple entry points lead to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in all student work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- The administration and staff believe that students need to be good readers and writers, explore higher-order thinking tasks and can discuss in small, differentiated groups. Yet these were observed inconsistently across classes. In a second grade ICT class students worked at stations, some on computers decoding words applying phonics, some at a reading stamina station where they read without interruption for a certain number of minutes self-tracking, some at a decoding words and applying phonics and word analysis skills, while two other groups worked with the ICT teachers in reciprocal reading groups. In one reciprocal reading group the teacher asked, “Why do you think it is called ‘suffrage tea’?” and “What kinds of things did suffragettes fight for?” However, in an ELL fourth grade science class, students had opportunities to pair-share to talk about themselves in a weather situation. However, the sharing of these experiences did not connect to the area of study becoming personal stories instead. During the modeling of predicting, students displayed off-task behavior staring out a window, neglecting to take notes or follow along.
- In a first grade literacy class, the academic intervention support (AIS) teacher pushed in and worked with a group of students to build phonological awareness by distinguishing long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words while the classroom teacher conducted reciprocal reading and clarified tricky words. However, although students had opportunities to pair-share the meanings of the words, several students on the edges of the rug displayed off-task disengaged behavior during discussion. In an ICT third grade math class students had a paired discussion about closed shapes, and one student used accountable talk stems stating he agreed and wanted to add on to what his peer had stated. Yet, discussion was surface level because the discussion question was Depth Of Knowledge (DOK) 1. Although in a fourth grade ICT class co-teachers worked with groups in a parallel teaching structure, students were off task in both with one student surreptitiously reading a book, one student with head in hands, and two discussing non-math topics.
- In a 12:1:1 fifth grade math class students worked in small groups to determine conversions of units of weight. Students were able to discuss and weigh different objects using academic vocabulary. Yet, all students had the same task without multiple entry points provided. Similarly in a third grade math class, students had the same task, manipulatives, and sat in groups to solve the equations. Some students were able to complete the assignment while others had difficulty using manipulatives to support their thinking.

## Additional Findings

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

Curricula and academic tasks inconsistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and reflect planning.

### Impact

Planning results in unevenly engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects across grades, subjects, and for English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, thus providing a diversity of learners with inconsistent access to the curricula and tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- Although teacher teams adjusted the pacing and developed a curriculum map at a glance to support student achievement, the planning and providing for multiple entry points for all learners to access the curriculum is inconsistent. In the unit plan overviews, there is evidence of vertical planning for essential questions, Common Core Learning Standards, and listing the baseline, midpoint, and benchmark assessments. Yet, there is no mention of planning for tiered groups of students based on those assessments.
- In some lesson plans, there is evidence of planning for tiered student groups determined by data. In a third grade math lesson there is evidence of tiered tasks “for students who get questions two and three wrong, another for students at level, and a third enrichment for students above level.” Conversely, in a fourth grade ELL science reading lesson on the reading skill of sequencing, the only evidence of an alternate entry point was for the “ELL students to illustrate the forms of precipitation, focus on key vocabulary words and use a word to organize details. In a second grade integrated co-teaching (ICT) lesson, each teacher’s plan included an area of differentiation called response to intervention. In one lesson it stated, “RTI-for those who are foggy-two and four,” while the co-teacher’s lesson states, “If a student misses exercises two and four, the student will be given RTI tier one activity p. 393B or Reteach 10.4,” thus showing inconsistency within the same ICT class. However, not all lessons do provide differentiated tasks for students at different levels. In a kindergarten lesson “to count to 100 by ones,” there were no tiered tasks for groups.
- Teachers started working with a consultant, *Better Lessons*, to refine curricula through the teach-measure-learn cycle. Although teachers stated that they use reading levels to guide small groups, select leveled texts, and provide individual bags of reading, this is not evident in lessons across the grades. Some math lesson plans show tiered tasks, while literacy lessons reviewed, show little to no evidence of small groups by reading levels. One second-grade ICT lesson provided stations for students to work on computers, reading stamina, word work, or work with one of the two teachers on reciprocal reading.
- Teachers explained that they use google.docs to house curricula and to provide feedback to each other. Teachers agreed google.docs provides transparency to “tie science and social studies into the curricula seamlessly.” Teachers agreed they give students more choice, for example, “In a biographies task, students selected the person, and choice leads to ownership.” Teachers continued, “We have taken the suggested text in ReadyGen and added to the rigor to push students and make it meaningful and real.” However, this level of rigor and access is not evident across plans. In a kindergarten math lesson the task to complete a 100s chart with missing numbers, is a Depth of Knowledge level 1 activity.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use or create common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula and inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Assessments provide limited feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement, thus results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction so that teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers gather data from baseline, mid-point, and benchmark assessments in ReadyGen, iReady, and Fountas and Pinnell assessments, to mark reading level growth and use data to craft goals. Teachers use a Fountas and Pinnell next steps form to craft group members, independent, small group, or teacher-led centers, and instructional focus, such as context clues and phonics. Teachers follow a schedule for assessing levels, with lower levels tested most often followed by those not progressing as expected. Although teachers create data-determined groups, the lessons reviewed and classrooms visited did not demonstrate consistent plans for these groups or differentiated scaffolded instruction to provide multiple entry points for leveled groups. Students have reading, writing, and math goals. Lower-grades' goals are taped on desks or in folders, and fourth/fifth graders create mid-year goals at a conference and students complete the form gaining ownership. When asked, students were able to tell their reading level but not their goals. Teachers stated, "Math lesson plans begin with a mini lesson, give a 'quick check' to create reteaching small groups to determine readiness to move forward." However, in classrooms this cycle was not observed.
- Consultants support teachers in gathering and analyzing data to determine next steps for curricula and teaching. Teachers are beginning to implement these skills. The impact of these data dives is beginning to show growth in student reading levels, but the growth is uneven. The work with the consultants demonstrates evidence of work on implementing a revised writing checklist to support students' using the checklist in their writing and writing independently to expand their writing stamina. Teachers collect data on students' use of the writing checklist strategy and revisit the data with their consultant to determine next steps.
- The school does not yet have a memorialized grading policy, but teachers stated and students agreed that each grade uses rubrics. A review of student work on bulletin boards inside and outside the classrooms, in folders and portfolios showed feedback on rubrics and varying degrees of comments. Some received actionable feedback with clear next steps; others did not. One essay had, "You did a good job stating your opinion, and you also summed up your ideas in the conclusion. Let's work on developing the reasons for your opinion." Conversely, others had "Great Job!" "14/20," "Awesome!" and others gave information that was not actionable, "We will continue to develop your sentence structure."
- During classroom visits checking for understanding was uneven. Some teachers, like a third grade math teacher moved from group to group checking on student progress and supporting student learning, but did not regroup the whole class to adjust instruction when a trend was noticed. Further, although a few teachers did track student responses, this was inconsistent across classes.

<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 aligned to The Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback

### Impact

School leaders provide training and have a system of accountability for those expectations. Staff and school leaders help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal and assistant principals consistently communicate high expectations to staff via varied sources, including emailed feedback, faculty conference bulletins, staff handbook, professional development, and the observation cycle, all aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition to the beginning of year goal-setting conference, administration also meets with all staff at a mid-year professional conversation to provide an opportunity to reflect on growth toward these goals. Teachers bring their data and follow a format for reflection.
- Administration holds staff accountable through a cycle of frequent classroom observations and actionable feedback sessions. A review of teacher observations demonstrate the actionable feedback for high expectations that leads to professional growth as it is supported through intervisitations, learning walks, coaching, and professional development opportunities. Professional development sessions are key to this process. Administration also contracts with *Better Lessons*, the Danielson Group, Generation Ready, and the New York City Interschool Teacher Development Coach, to include teacher training. Teachers meet in teams with coaches and consultants stating that this has created trust and collegiality as they share best practices and are open in learning from each other. Additionally teachers intervisit others' classes as well as attend learning walks, which they say has helped their own teaching.
- Parents spoke about the workshops provided such as monthly grade workshops on curricula, fostering homework abilities, literacy workshop to support reading at home, and transition in the early grades. Further, they spoke about the Harvard graduates who spoke with fifth graders about their careers and college. Parents spoke about the principal's open-door policy and how they are welcomed as partners in their child's education. Consistent communication is how the parents described the school and how the teachers communicate through Class Dojo, phone calls, emails, and even with reading progress reports. Parents stated that Class Dojo provides clarity on their child's behavior and assignments. Parents stated they are pleased to be able to communicate so closely and consistently with teachers who reply quickly and professionally. One parent volunteers weekly and stated that teachers are comfortable inviting her into classrooms to help. Parents commented that everyone seems to work together toward the school goals.