



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Luis Llorens Torres Children's Academy

09X114

**1155 Cromwell Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Olivia Francis-Webber

**Date of review: December 18, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

The School Context

09X114 is an elementary school with 877 students from kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 22% Black, 72% Hispanic, 1% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 18% 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 91.0%.

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	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	Focus	Developing
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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff and provide training to support them in meeting those expectations. School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to families and provide feedback that informs them about their children's progress towards meeting those expectations.

Impact

All teachers are aware of and receive varied supports that enable them to meet the high expectations placed upon them. Families understand expectations for their children and how they can help their children make progress towards learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have been trained to meet instructional expectations linked to the Danielson Framework for Teaching as part of school support for teacher development. They also participate in professional development sessions from the Center for Educational Partnerships at Fordham University which focused on use of literacy strategies such as close reading, using academic vocabulary, preparing for the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test, tracking English Language Learner student progress and integrating informational text in the English as a Second Language / bilingual classroom. An alliance with Fordham University enhances professional development opportunities for teachers, helping to further build their capacity in meeting expectations for teaching and learning.
- Parents state that teachers and instructional coaches provide bi-weekly training for families in how to use Common Core math and English language arts strategies. In addition, a large number of parents attend monthly parent association meetings.
- Tuesday meetings and regular telephone communication enhance the home-school alliance in supporting student progress. Specifically, parents have an opportunity to meet with teachers every Tuesday afternoon. In addition, many teachers offer two-way communication via telephone.
- Students and families have home access to *RAZ-Kids* online academic interactive books for children. Daily homework sheets contain targeted skill areas in which students need extra support and rubrics and checklists are also sent home daily, allowing families to help their children meet expectations by working with them at home.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school is developing in the use of assessment data to measure student progress towards goals across grades and subjects and follow up with timely adjustments to curricula and instruction that accelerate student achievement. Teachers' assessment practices in the area of using checks for understanding are not yet consistently evident across all classrooms.

Impact

While, school wide administration of assessments such as Running Records facilitates school-wide analysis of students' progress in achieving learning targets, lack of planning for and consistent implementation of targeted instructional interventions based on data limits student support and achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- School-wide, teachers administer Fountas and Pinnell Running Records to gauge student reading levels. This data is captured in a school-wide data binder. Analysis of the September administration reflects that fifty eight percent of the students, school-wide, are reading at proficiency level 1.
- As observed in an Integrated Co-teaching classroom, students were working on a math task in small groups with a variety of special education para-professionals, a speech teacher, English as a second language teacher and a counselor. As noted by school leaders, although each adult had a checklist, not all service providers in the room used it to check for understanding as the lesson progressed.
- Although teachers in some classrooms were observed circulating to observe and confer with students, in other classrooms there were students who struggled with the task and required but did not receive extra support. For example, in one class where students were using tens rods and unit cubes to engage in a collaborative number re-grouping game, with a focus on place value, some students at a table made no distinction between the tens rods and the unit cubes; rather they counted every concrete item as 1. During this lesson, there was no evidence of intervention for these students based on real-time assessment of their skill proficiency.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Instructional planning reflects a focus on providing a diversity of learners with access to cognitively engaging curricula and tasks.

Impact

Teachers are engaged in ongoing planning, alignment and integration of curricular programs to ensure instructional coherence, cognitive engagement and appropriate instructional support for each student.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use varied curricula in English language arts and math. During the leadership conference, the principal stated that the school is using *Math in Focus* and *Go Math*. In English language arts, the principal states that the school is using the *Reading Street* program for its English Language Learner scaffolds, along with *Ready Gen*, and is now integrating the Teachers' College writing curriculum to provide more opportunities for writing across grades and content areas. The principal further stated that the curriculum team developed science and social studies curriculum maps through a crosswalk analysis of the Common Core Learning Standards and the Instructional Shifts.
- Sample curriculum maps and sample lesson plans reflect focal Common Core Learning standards, essential questions, guiding questions and assessments and provide short lists of scaffolds for English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities and Talented and Gifted students.
- The school's curriculum team focuses on ongoing curricula alignment. Teacher teams stated that the curriculum team comprising the English Language Arts coordinator, the math coordinator, the science coordinator and several other teachers, help to design curricula, with a focus on supports for English Language Learners and students with disabilities.
- The principal stated the school's instructional focus is "math through literacy". She further explained that this focus was identified to support the challenges that students are encountering when attempting to read and understand word problems. As part of math instruction, a thirty minute word problem challenge is conducted daily throughout all classrooms. During this time students are offered opportunities to "explore different types of word problems and are expected to persevere". In addition math has been shifted to the morning on the Wednesday and Thursday schedule to provide extra time for students to practice math problem-solving.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best, informed by the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for teaching. Students engage in tasks that promote high level thinking and participation.

Impact

Implementation of Common Core-aligned curricula guides teaching practices that promote high-level thinking and participation on the part of students in all classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In alignment with the *Reading Street* curriculum, across the grades teachers conduct vocabulary preview at the beginning of each week, within a unit. In a second grade class the vocabulary preview consisted of discussing the meaning of the words, providing anecdotal examples or illustrations of the words and having students demonstrate their understanding of the word by answering “application” questions about the word.
- In alignment with the *Reading Street* curriculum, teachers engage students in high frequency word drills. In one classroom this activity was differentiated across three different levels. Students were divided into the following word study groups based upon the *Baseline Group Test* data – strategic intervention, on-level and advanced. The strategic intervention group engaged in guided spelling of the r-controlled words. The on-level group read the words in isolation and in context and the advanced group looked up the definitions of the words and wrote original sentences for the words.
- Every week teachers across the grades focus on a Common Core-aligned reading comprehension skill through the implementation of the reading workshop. A lower-grade teacher’s focus on identifying and demonstrating understanding of facts and supporting details in a text began with a mini-lesson in which the teacher used a picture to name facts and identify supporting details. The teacher then used a PowerPoint to discuss the terms, “fact” and “supporting details”, after which students engaged in guided practice by reading a short selection on hummingbirds and collaboratively distinguishing between the facts and supporting details. In accordance with the workshop model, these activities were precursory to the independent reading period wherein students were instructed to read differentiated (varying complexity levels) selections and identify the facts and supporting details within.
- Teachers teach and allow students to use multiple methods to solve math problems. For example, in one classroom students were engaged in dividing double digit numbers by single digit numbers. The teacher worked with a guided group, using arrays, while more advanced students were observed using algorithms to solve the problems for their group.

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

Teacher teams engage in the analysis of student work and assessment data with targeted focus on ongoing improvement in teacher practice. Distributed leadership structures are in place, allowing teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

Teacher team meetings allow teachers to collaborate in analyzing performance trends and developing strategies to address students’ needs. Distributed leadership structures provide opportunities for teacher leadership and input in school level decision-making.

Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher team meeting, teachers were observed discussing the challenges that students are having with understanding and solving math word problems. As teachers analyzed student work they discussed the strategies that students used as well as students’ errors, and determined that, “In attempting to translate word problems, sometimes students don’t put the numbers in the right place or use the correct operation.” Teacher team identification of this prevailing challenge led the school to shift the instructional schedule to provide more time for math instruction on Wednesday and Thursday mornings. In addition, as informed by teacher team data, a weekly math lab with a focus on word problems has been established across the grades.
- Teachers at a team meeting stated that there are many opportunities for teacher leadership development. For example, teachers on the curriculum team collaborate with administrators to develop aspects of the instructional program; the professional development team surveys teachers to generate a menu of topics for schoolwide professional development sessions; and there are several lead teachers who help peers across the grades to refine their practice daily.
- Teachers stated that teacher teams deepen the work of improving achievement by all learners, as teams focus collaboratively on supports for English Language Learners and are constantly engaged in curricular refinement and alignment. They reported that teams focus on scaffolds for English Language Learners and students with disabilities, using practices such as planning language objectives in addition to performance-based objectives for each lesson, building vocabulary before each lesson, and reading entire texts aloud before assigning students to engage in close-reading of texts independently.