



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Academy for Independent Learning and Leadership

Middle School X129

**2055 Mapes Avenue
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Raymond Granda

**Date of review: January 16th, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell**

The School Context

Academy of Independent Learning and Leadership is a middle school with students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 32% Black, 63% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 28% 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 92.3%.

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	Developing
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	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	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and families connected with college and career readiness.

Impact

As a result of systems of accountability, staff is fully aware of school-wide expectations and provides feedback to families so that they understand student progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared that there is a school-wide instructional focus of student discussion and student engagement through multiple entry points. School leaders inform teachers of school-wide expectations through professional development, school-wide newsletters; written feedback aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching, and structured teacher intervisitation.
- School leaders provide teachers with documentation of school-wide expectations. The staff handbook includes expectations for teachers on lesson planning, unit planning, and instructional expectations.
- School leaders and faculty created a college and career committee that has worked to expand awareness to students and families. The committee has created opportunities for parents and students to visit a local college yearly and learn about the expectations of college students.
- The school uses Skedula software to post assignments, grades, and comments to better communicate with parents about student progress. Parents have appreciated the increase in communication around what is happening in their children's classroom.
- Parents reported that they attended school workshops regarding Common Core Learning Standards and college and career readiness as well as meetings regarding student progress. The school sends out progress reports four times per year and teachers also created action plans for students at risk.

Area of Focus

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

Teachers collaborate in structured professional collaborations to review data that has been analyzed by school leaders. Teacher teams use protocols to examine student work; however, adapting curricula based on findings is not yet an embedded school-wide practice across teacher teams.

Impact

Consequently, teacher collaborations do not yet completely capture student needs as they relate to the Common Core Learning Standards or allow teachers to focus on trends across student groups.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use protocols to structure their meetings. A review of the mathematics team meeting minutes and agendas reveals the team covered items such as surfacing gaps, next steps for students, and next steps for instruction. However, these items do not yet uncover patterns for groups of students or provide a deep understanding of student needs. For instance, in one math team meeting sheet teachers cited student next steps as “they need to work with fractions,” and the instructional modification as “include more activities that will ensure that students get more mathematical practice.”
- A vertical English Language Arts (ELA) team meeting was observed reviewing a 7th grade student essay and normed according to the rubric. Some teachers were discussing what constituted a level three or four in counterclaim, but that process was not scaled up to the entire team. During the share out process, one teacher asked, “So what do we give this student?” Other teachers responded in unison “four!” This process does not yet allow for different interpretations of the rubric to be normed, nor does it uncover student misconceptions or next steps.
- School leaders analyze assessments such as the New York State ELA Exam results and provide teacher teams with data analysis. Teachers review assessments with multiple choice questions and identify correct and incorrect answers. A review of teacher team agendas and minutes reveals that teachers review school leaders’ assessment findings but do not conduct a deep analysis of students’ skill set.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty have made purposeful decisions in aligning their curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

The school maintains a coherent curricula, across grades and subjects, that promote higher-order thinking skills for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities as well as promote college and career readiness.

- School leaders and faculty have adopted a common unit plan that includes essential questions, student objectives, academic vocabulary, student supports, and performance tasks. A review of units of study across content areas show coherence in the use of multiple leveled texts both literary and informational with tasks that require students support their claim with evidence. For instance in an 8th grade ELA unit on heroes students compared multiple texts, stated a claim, and cited relevant text-based evidence to support their claim.
- Although the school has purchased Code X in ELA, and Connected Mathematics Project 3 and Go Math in mathematics curricula that align to Common Core Learning Standards they also supplement with school created units. For instance, students in 7th grade recently completed a unit on Lord of the Flies that included informational and literary texts, in which students completed a rubric-based performance task summative assessment which required them to pull evidence from multiple sources.
- A review of school's unit plans and curriculum maps shows that teachers have included supplemental materials and supports for students with disabilities as well as ELLs in their planning.
- A review of unit plans showed units across content areas that emphasized rigorous tasks through common assessments; state test aligned benchmarks, and performance based tasks with rubrics. For example, a 7th grade math unit on rationale numbers sets forth multiple formative assessments and a summative assessment grounded in real world problem sets. The unit includes multiple forms of representation for problem solving and identifies multiple entry points for students with disabilities and ELLs.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use grading policies, rubrics, and assessment and provide actionable feedback to students. Furthermore, the school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals.

Impact

As a result, the school is able to capture student progress and performance and use the results to adjust instruction and curricula to fit the needs of their students. Furthermore, all learners are provided with feedback to help them understand their next learning steps.

- School leaders and key faculty members create, administer, and analyze common assessments based on the state tests as well as skills based assessments. Teachers determine students' reading levels based on assessment results and are able to plan for instruction to address the gaps. For instance, the ELA team found that on their created baseline assessment students struggled with the central idea of the text and it became a focus in the department across grades.
- School leaders and teachers administer common assessments every six weeks to determine student progress towards goals. School leaders disseminate common assessment results in the form of item analysis to teacher teams. The teams then use to item analysis to review student work and make adjustments in their unit planning.
- Across subjects, student work posted on classroom and hallway bulletin boards, and in student folders provided evidence that teachers provide students with rubric-based comments that inform learners of their next steps. Teachers use the assessment results and student comments to make action plans for their students that include interventions attempted, objectives, next steps, and timeline for improvement.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and expectations of Common Core Learning Standards. Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provided multiple-entry points for students and reflected uneven levels of student thinking.

Impact

Consequently, all learners are not copiously demonstrating higher-order thinking skills and producing meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders reported that teachers include multiple entry points and differentiation into lessons to meet student needs. While some teachers provided scaffolded supports such as leveled texts, using Achieve300 resources, and multiple entry points for students, including ELLs, these techniques, when used, were not consistently engaging learners to demonstrate higher order thinking. For example, in a 7th ELA classroom a teacher was observed modeling how to summarize a text using a PowerPoint, exemplar text, and think aloud, however, when students moved to group work they were given a passage and eight multiple choice questions before completing a summary of text.
- School leaders reported that teachers receive feedback focused on Danielson components 3b and 3c because there is a school-wide goal of making lessons more student centric. Across classrooms visited, student discussions were inconsistent. For instance, in one social studies classroom, students were in groups answering questions from the textbook, but worked independently. However, in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) ELA class, teachers conference with groups of students and asked higher-order questions to promote student discussions.
- In a 7th grade math classroom, students worked in groups and were vibrantly engaged in translating and solving multi-step equations. The teacher created scaffolded and differentiated worksheets for student groups. The worksheets included problems of varying difficulty. Students were observed discussing problem components using appropriate academic vocabulary, sharing solution strategies, and checking each other's work. However, this alignment of supports to the objective of the lesson, and high-levels of student discussion are not yet embedded across grades and subjects.