



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**P.S. 150 Charles James Fox**

**Elementary School X150**

**920 East 167 Street  
Bronx  
NY 10459**

**Principal: Edwin Irizarry**

**Date of review: March 16, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone**

## The School Context

P.S. 150 Charles James Fox is an elementary school with 925 students from grade Pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 76% Hispanic, 2% White, 1% Asian and 1% Other students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.0%.

## 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>Celebration</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>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>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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Higher order skills are consistently emphasized for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, across grades and content areas.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions ensure that academic tasks push student thinking across grades and subjects areas, promoting college and career readiness for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Curricular documents demonstrate purposeful alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. For example, the Ready Gen curriculum has been modified to create a more balanced literacy approach by rearranging and pacing the units to include independent and guided reading time, and expanding writing through the writing process across content areas. Reading is supplemented with an online library, MyOn, and Reading A-Z. There is the systematic building of knowledge across grades with a strong emphasis on multiple texts on a topic, research, and tasks that require text-based evidence. Vertical teams meet to examine work across grades to ensure a seamless progression of the Common Core Standards. Teacher created units supplement the Common Core-aligned curricula they have adopted.
- Throughout the math curriculum there is a focus on expressing mathematical thinking in writing and discussions. Go Math is the primary curriculum, supplemented by EngageNY as an instructional resource to support Common Core -aligned instruction.
- Within curricular units and plans, rigorous content is scaffolded for English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities (SWDs) and accelerated learners. For example, a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade unit on building ideas has modifications for ELLs that include visuals, a modified checklist, and scaffolded graphic organizers. Accelerated learners are asked to engage in peer editing and have checklists and graphic organizers that are scaffolded for their level. A kindergarten plan includes scaffolds for SWDs that include the use of the SMARTboard to display a bigger visual and a demonstration on how to use a table of contents. A 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math lesson on using the distributive property includes an enrichment exercise in Spanish. A 3<sup>rd</sup> grade performance-based task on writing an informative article includes reading selections on the same topic for low, medium and high level readers.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points to cognitively engage all students. Work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation.

### Impact

Across classrooms, the missed opportunities to consistently engage all learners in challenging tasks and higher order thinking hinder students from exhibiting their work at high levels.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms there were some strategies and scaffolds in use to support student learning at different levels including the use of visuals, charts, manipulatives, and graphic organizers. Modeling was also used as in a lesson on creating bold beginnings for a writing assignment where the teacher first gave examples that were put on the SMARTboard, then had the class do one example together, followed by students working on their own pieces. However, in other classes there were missed opportunities to support students. In a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class students were asked to discuss in their groups and then write in their journals whether the Richter Scale was a more accurate method for measuring an earthquake than the Mercalli Intensity Scale and to support their claim, missing strategies to engage in close reading and comprehension of the text.
- In most classrooms visited, teachers engaged in whole group instruction without tailoring instructional activities to meet the needs of students at varying levels. In a bilingual 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class, students were asked to determine and visually represent the concept of one half. Although vocabulary was presented in the target language, the activity did not accommodate the various levels of English language acquisition among students in the class. Whole group instruction in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade math class on comparing fractions did not accommodate for higher-level students.
- In the classrooms visited, questioning strategies to promote higher levels of student thinking and discussion were inconsistent. Some teachers asked low level recall questions that did not ask for students to think strategically or extend their thinking. For example, in a 1<sup>st</sup> grade class, where students were reading about goods and services, the teacher asked, "What's her job? Who remembers?" She asked follow-up questions that asked students to provide short fill-in type phrases. For example, the teacher asked, "To help them do what?" A student responded, "Figure out." "Figure out what?" In a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class the teacher modeled comparing and contrasting Caesar Chavez to civil rights leaders and then asked students to write in their journals regarding what the differences that they had noted said about the U.S. This becomes a missed opportunity for a deep, rich discussion to probe the content and implications of what they had read so that students could question the text, raise issues and take ownership of their learning.

## Additional Findings

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

Across grades and departments, teachers use common assessments that offer a comprehensive overview of student progress, providing information to make curricular and instructional adjustments and give actionable and meaningful feedback to students.

### Impact

The school's use of common assessments, data analysis and feedback allows teachers to determine student progress towards goals and adjust instruction accordingly to meet the needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers create and use common rubrics that have been crafted and modified to align to curricula and be accessible to students. For example, the section on organization of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade narrative writing rubric was rendered into a child-friendly rubric so that language such as, "Sequence of two or more events unfolds naturally..." in the original rubric becomes, "Events are sequenced. Student includes two or more events" as part of a checklist with gradients from 1 to 4 for each item. Teachers also create task specific rubrics such as the Freedom Narrative Rubric used in 4<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Teachers provide rubric-aligned comments to sustain a grade on a piece of student work. Comments include successes, challenges and next steps. For example, in response to a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student's narrative piece of writing, the teacher wrote, "You have a clear beginning, middle and end (and) attempt to include dialogue, too. Next time we will work on showing, not telling the character's feelings." There is a practice of having students work on drafting so as to incorporate necessary revisions before producing a final copy. Drafts with suggestions and revisions along with the final product are posted on bulletin boards.
- During a student meeting, students spoke about using rubrics to guide their work. One student said, "We use rubrics during and after we publish. When we use them during our work, it comes out better." Regarding a rubric indicator, another student said, "My next steps were to use transitional words. When I'm stuck, I look at my sheet. Instead of 'I think that', I'll say, 'I'm of the opinion'."
- Teachers engage in the ongoing monitoring of students to assess progress towards goals and identify student groups. For example, based on data from reading trackers, teachers develop guided reading lesson plans by level. A plan titled "What level C/3 reader needs to get to level D/4" lists the students in that group. Additionally, the plan describes what each is able to do and needs to work on, a range of questions aligned to varying levels of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DoK), and also includes added teacher notes for particular students.
- Action plans are formulated to identify goals, modify instruction and inform student groupings. Teachers spoke about how this practice also allows students to see their progress. For example, a Literacy Individualized Action Plan for a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student lists scores on a number of assessments including predictives and tracks progress three times a year. Strengths and weakness in reading and writing are noted and goals are developed along with a date for completion. For example, one goal reads, "(The student) will be able to make support inferences with examples from the text."

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

High expectations are consistently communicated to the staff by using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations to families to apprise them of student progress.

### Impact

School leaders' high expectations result in staff awareness of instructional expectations. Parents are aware of their children's academic progress, as well as school-wide expectations leading to college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal has provided staff with verbal and written expectations. At the beginning of the year at a staff conference teachers received data analyses that led to a collaboratively defined school-wide instructional focus to incorporate rigorous instructional practices and promote student engagement in all content areas. To support the implementation of rigorous practices to support the instructional focus and alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT), an array of professional learning sessions has been offered that include "Effective Questioning/ Discussion Starters and Techniques", and "Using Assessment in Instruction".
- Observation feedback is linked to the school's instructional focus and ongoing training that is provided as a way to hold teachers accountable to meeting the school-wide expectations. For example, one comment read, "In order to strengthen student engagement via questioning and discussion techniques ... incorporate accountable talk prompts into your daily routines. Also ... (use) the DoK wheel. For example, 'How do you know the author's purpose of this text? Explain your thinking.'"
- Feedback and ongoing communication is consistently provided to families through such venues as progress reports and progress updates that give an overall view of student achievement, and newsletters that inform parents of grade-by-grade instructional topics and tips they can use to support their children at home. For example, the spring edition of the C.S. 150 newsletter showed the instructional topics from Pre-K to 5<sup>th</sup> grade for science, exhorted parents to expose their children to various genres, to ask them questions throughout the reading of a story, expand on children's answers by repeating what they say and asking more questions, and allowing opportunities for praise and encouragement when they answer or give opinions. "Home & School Connection" newsletters from Resources for Educators are also distributed to families that have included helpful items such as "Back to School Routines", and "A Plan for Homework". Parents of kindergarten students also receive detailed weekly homework sheets that outline activities parents should do with their children every night of the week, such as, "Read 15-20 minutes on MyOn." and, "Write sight words 5 times each." Spanish versions of this newsletter are also available.
- During a parent meeting, parents indicated that they receive numerous communications from their children's teachers including behavior charts for teacher-parent collaborative monitoring. They also spoke about informative workshops. The workshop on Common Core math emphasized that students need to show their work. Additional help to parents is provided when needed. One parent said, "The teacher showed me how she teaches. She sent a written breakdown so I could explain it to my son."

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

Teacher teams engage in professional collaborations by analyzing assessment data and student work and arriving at key decisions regarding curricular and instructional practices.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher collaboration resulting in improvement to pedagogical practices and shared leadership affecting adult and student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams consistently analyze student work to improve teacher practice and enhance student achievement. During a teacher team observed, the 1<sup>st</sup> grade team examined student work based on a task that asked students to write what happened when they had to make a choice. Through a protocol that asked teachers to examine a piece of writing, interpret the student’s attempt and derive implications for instruction, they saw that one student’s piece revealed that the student had misinterpreted whether to elaborate on one choice or list many, for the child had listed a series of sentences, each describing a different choice. As a team, teachers decided to revise their graphic organizer so that it would be clear that students are to write and draw a picture about one choice. They also added an activity where students could share their thoughts with a peer before writing. Teacher conferencing with the child was determined as a next step to help the child revise her writing.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about how collaborative examination of student work and data has led to instructional adjustments. For example, when NYSESLAT scores revealed that students did better in reading and writing than in speaking and listening, curriculum units were revised to include additional activities emphasizing speaking and listening. Teachers also spoke about modifying Ready Gen units for students with disabilities so they could access appropriate texts to complete Common Core-aligned assignments.
- Teachers assume leadership roles in school-wide committees including professional learning communities, the instructional team, the PD committee, the ELL/Bilingual Team and Grade leaders. The instructional team, which comprises the data specialist, coaches, special education teachers, teachers of English language learners, and other teachers, has been key in establishing school-wide goals and analyzing school-wide data to identify instructional needs and next steps for professional learning. One teacher said, “We have control over the pacing calendars and the freedom to use other resources to tweak curriculum.”