



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Juan Ponce de Leon**

**Elementary School X161**

**628 Tinton Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10455**

**Principal: Eliamarie Soto**

**Date of review: January 22, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

## The School Context

Ponce De Leon is an elementary school with 545 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 22% Black, 75% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 16% 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>Additional Findings</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>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> |
|---------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|

### Findings

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

### Impact

Effective collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers. Teachers have a voice in key decisions that promote shared leadership and improved student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Administration structured the master schedule such that teachers have common preparation periods to meet vertically and horizontally. Teachers use protocols to guide the inquiry work of looking at student work and assessment data to determine progress toward goals. Teachers agree that the sharing of best practices creates collegiality and strengthens instructional capacity. For example, one teacher explained that she had moved from a different grade and that her new grade-level colleagues have supported her acclimation by sharing tips and best practices for implementing the Common Core Learning Standards' shifts. Her colleagues explained that it is a mutual benefit as they gain as well from her, thus strengthening each other's instructional capacity.
- Grade team leaders facilitate the team meetings where they analyze student work and data to determine next steps in instruction. For example, teachers noticed that the time frame that was originally determined to teach research and writing process was too fast paced because students were not progressing toward goals as planned. The team hypothesized that it was only the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT)/English language learner (ELL) class that was behind in the pacing. Yet data analysis of the grade determined that students across the grade were struggling with the content and this impacted the pacing timeframe in all classes, not just the ICT/ELL class. As a result the team revamped the pacing of the unit for all students.
- Grade team leaders meet weekly with leadership cabinet to review the week prior and upcoming week instructional goals and plans. Grade team leaders voice teachers concerns and areas of need at these weekly meetings. For example, after an analysis of student data from assessments, a grade team determined that they should teach 'module b' before 'module a' in ReadyGen, for English language arts. Grade team leaders share these curricula changes at the leadership cabinet meetings, thus maintaining a transparent communication while voicing key decisions that affect student learning.

## 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 through discussion. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

The Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts are beginning to inform teaching practices. Inconsistent adherence to student discussion protocols and implementation of multiple entry points, result in students' mixed engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- Administration and staff believe that students learn best through discussion in small groups. In groups, student discussion occurred at varied levels of making meaning. In a fifth grade class students were in data-determined groups with tiered writing assignments for creating opinion essays. The teacher grouped students, provided scaffolds according to students' needs, as well as writing checklists and rubric. Students discussed concerns and questions and one student shared her writing with a group member. However in a second grade class, students answered teacher-student questions on low levels of Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK). Additionally, in a bilingual self-contained fifth grade, only the teacher's voice was heard while students, although grouped at tables, did not interact with each other before, during, or after a video on fact and opinion.
- Another focus area is embedding higher-order thinking skills and questions in student work. Yet, this was unevenly demonstrated. In a 3rd grade class, students were placed in data-determined groups for a junior architect project to participate in a high-level thinking task in finding areas of rectilinear figures. However, in the lesson observed, students' tasks involved multiplication practice only. One group practiced solving workbook problems using the multiplication table provided, another group declined the table saying they did not need it, and a third group rolled dice creating and solving problems. In a third grade ICT class, leveled groups using tiered non-fiction self-selected reading task cards. One group answered comprehension questions and created their own higher-order thinking question, while another practiced using context clues to determine word meaning, another created a pre-question, chose a reading, and answered their own questions, and one group practiced expressing questions. Yet, as students sat in three data-determined groups in a 12:1:1 K-1 class, in the teacher's group, students answered DOK level one-two questions. However in another group, the students were being led with fill-in-the blank questions or did not have opportunity to answer the questions posed because the adult asking, also answered them.
- In several classes multiple entry points provided engagement but it was uneven. In an ICT kindergarten class, students sorted manipulatives, made letters and numbers on play-dough mats, and used game cubes and dice. Similarly, in a 12:1:1 K-1 class students used manipulatives shaped as ice cream scoops to show multiple representations of an equation, and whiteboards with base-ten blocks. In a fifth grade bilingual self-contained class students watched a ten-minute video without any method to involve, entry point, or note-taking device, leaving students without a method to demonstrate engagement.

## Additional Findings

|                           |                       |                |                   |
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| <b>Quality Indicator:</b> | <b>1.1 Curriculum</b> | <b>Rating:</b> | <b>Proficient</b> |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Purposeful curricula decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students so that a diversity of learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, are cognitively engaged in rigorous tasks across grades and subjects.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular maps and lessons demonstrate purposeful revisions based on student work and data from common formative and summative assessments and student work. For example, the second grade teachers determined that students, including ELLs and students with special needs required additional support with biographical texts and made several curricular and instructional adjustments to support and accelerate student learning. To support students' needs, teachers revised the lesson by providing different leveled texts and scaffolds to support finding details and determining main idea as well as author's purpose. As a result, post-assessment results revealed increased student achievement on these skill sets.
- Curriculum maps demonstrate coherence in incorporation of essential questions and enduring understandings in all subjects and grades and include intentional adaptations such as supplemental programs for acquisition of Tier two vocabulary words. Coherence of curricula proved evident when viewing curricula documents from fourth grade mathematics comparing fractions using symbols of greater than and less than. The entire fourth grade implemented the unit and posted student work on bulletin boards in the hallways. This practice is common across the school as grade team leaders oversee the curriculum map creations and work vertically and horizontally to create coherence school-wide. For example, during a vertical team meeting, the upper grades shared that students struggle in mathematics with two-step problems and are now incorporating the skill into the end of first grade and all through second to ensure greater success for the skill in third grade.
- Lessons plans across the school demonstrate alignment to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and inclusion of 'I Can' statements, essential questions, flexible data-determined grouping, and planning for tiered activities and scaffolds to provide access to all students. Lesson plans delineate student names for groups, demonstrating flexibility.

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

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

### Impact

Aligned assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers provide actionable feedback to students in regard to both areas of successful achievement and those in need of improvement. Additionally, the feedback while rooted in the rubric, is in language that is available for the student. Students remarked that the feedback they receive helps them to move to the next level. Students spoke about rubrics with facility and demonstrated ability to speak to their goals and areas of growth in assignments. Additionally students referred to goals for reading, writing, and mathematics. Although teachers implemented them differently, students had similar experiences with setting, revisiting, and recreating goals at intervals throughout the year based on rubric feedback. Some are posted in classroom bulletin boards, some are taped to desks, and some are in notebooks.
- In analyzing a pre-assessment on sorting, kindergarten teachers, realized that not all students were able to sort items based on color, size, and shapes, and thus made adjustments to teach properties of comparison in greater depth. The post-test revealed vastly improved scores, with some students getting near-perfect or perfect scores. Similarly, teachers use formative common assessments in student work samples to determine needed revisions in curricula and instruction. For example, in a third grade class, the teacher reviewing student work on perimeter noticed that some students could not add multiple numbers so decided to reteach using the open number line strategy, providing students with an alternate entry point. This afforded students opportunities for skill mastery and improved results. In a fifth grade math class, a group of students were unable to represent a quotient using a model. The teacher revised the lesson based on student work, incorporating a new order of manipulative usage that proved to support students' learning as evidenced by student work sample comparisons.
- Teachers use Common Core-aligned rubrics from Ready Gen and Go Math. Additionally, they create, modify, or acquire outside resources to meet the needs of their students developing their own checklists and rubrics for specific tasks. For example, in a fifth grade opinion writing task, students used a writing checklist for opinion essays as they wrote essays and then used an evaluation rubric when they were done to ensure that they had met all the requirements of a Level 4 essay. Further, grade-team leads determined a need to revise pre-assessments because Ready Gen literacy multiple-choice pre-assessments because they were not good predictors of future performance, as students consistently did well on the pre-assessment and poorly on the post-assessment. Teachers developed a new initial assessment tool using performance tasks with open-ended questions, thus challenging students to use higher-order thinking skills and providing teachers with a more accurate estimate of student skills.

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| <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 (professionalism, instruction, communication, and other elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching) to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students

### Impact

School leaders provide training and have a system of accountability for set expectations. Teacher teams and staff offer ongoing and detailed feedback and guidance/advisement supports that prepare students for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders communicate high expectations to staff through emails and newsletters, inter-visitations, and professional development calendar. Assistant Principals send emails to the grade levels they supervise. The instructional expectations are listed in the staff handbook as well as conveyed at professional development sessions. Additionally, school leaders support staff with a staff requested, designed, and delivered professional development calendar that is aligned to the school goals and are rooted in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Administration holds staff accountable through a transparent system of classroom observations and feedback to teachers with next steps.
- Teachers consistently communicate high expectations to students through classroom tasks and environment. High expectations begin with goal setting, where teachers work with students to develop goals. Students stated that they write mathematics, reading, and writing goals and post them on bulletin boards, desks, and in reading notebooks to keep them as reminders of what they are working to achieve. Further, students agreed that in January they reflected on goals and if the goals were achieved they received another card to create new goals. To communicate high expectations in classroom tasks and environment, teachers collaborate in teams meetings to ensure that the curricula and instruction are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts as well as providing students with scaffolds based on targeted student feedback from common formative assessments, in order to achieve these standards. To provide a culture for learning that consistently communicates these high expectations, teachers conduct environmental walk-throughs in peers' classrooms and provide noticings and next steps based on areas of concern school-wide. Administration provides feedback summaries of the walk-throughs to the grade leaders who then share it with their grade teams. Teachers said that this process has helped to build collegiality and shared purpose.
- The guidance counselor provides students with ongoing support and feedback regarding preparation for their next level. For example, the guidance counselor provides parent workshops for the transition to Pre-Kindergarten (PK), PK-1, and 5-6. In concert with the parent coordinator, teachers contact parents weekly, inviting them to various workshops for curriculum activities, where the grade expectations are distributed and clarified. The guidance counselor communicates with the parents of the ELLs as part of a school-wide collaborative effort to close the language barrier through offering translated workshops and school calendars, and use of Rosetta Stone for parents to acquire English language skills.