



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Lorraine Hansberry Academy

12X214

**1970 West Farms Road
Bronx, NY 10460**

Principal: David Cintron

Date of review: December 10, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone

School Quality Criteria

The Lorraine Hansberry Academy PS/MS 214 is an elementary and middle school with 1028 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 24% Black, 70% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 19% 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%.

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	Well Developed
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	Focus	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across grades and departments, teachers create and 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 assessment practices have resulted in all students demonstrating improved mastery across content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- In every class visited there was evidence that teachers used rubrics and assessments aligned with the school's curricula that yield data regarding student progress. Goals for student mastery at different levels, within a class that were created based on needs defined by data, were captured in the form of sub-group goals that were visibly posted.
- Throughout the school, teachers use commonly designed rubrics aligned to the school's curricula to offer targeted actionable feedback to students so they can achieve at higher levels. An example of this is, "Work on using signal words and mathematical terminology when writing explanations. Be sure to show how model representations are connected to mathematical knowledge." Students spoke about how feedback informed their next steps to improve. One student said, "My next step in math was to show my work and explain the process more clearly. Now that I'm doing that, I'm getting good grades." Another student said, "I used sophisticated language and complex sentences to get a better grade on my essay."
- All assessments are common on every grade and subject, along with benchmarks to measure progress. Teacher-designed, grade-wide, curriculum-aligned assessments are used to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Data from these assessments are recorded on Student Assessment Sheets to track progress and are used by individual teachers as well as teacher teams to develop goals for different levels of student groups in their classes including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Student groups within a class are designated as red, yellow, green and blue, ranging from lowest to highest. For example, the yellow group goal for a sixth grade literacy class reads, "By January 6, 2015, students in this group will be able to determine an author's point of view in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text with 80% accuracy as measured by weekly quizzes, unit exams, and in-class teacher observations."
- All teacher teams engage in a systematic analysis of student work to adjust curricular and instructional decisions for all students and streamline Response to Intervention services for selected students. For example, when a review of student work revealed that students were not adding sufficient details to their writing, instruction was modified to add teacher modeling of writing during classroom instruction.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across the school, teaching strategies allow all students to be engaged in challenging tasks. However, opportunities to embed strategic supports that allow greater student initiative and extended discussions within student groups vary across classrooms.

Impact

Across classrooms, curricular supports allow students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities to provide students strategic venues to extend their thinking and demonstrate initiative so that all learners can take ownership of their work.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teaching strategies consistently provided multiple entry points in the form of tiered differentiation that provided group-specific activities to allow all students including ELLs and students with disabilities to demonstrate thinking. For example, in a sixth grade math class, different sections of a handbook were assigned to different groups. In an eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA) Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, level-based groups were assigned different prompts to answer regarding a shared text. However, high quality supports and extensions into the curricula that allow students to not only make connections among concepts previously believed to be unrelated but arrive at new understandings of complex material and make unsolicited contributions are not yet an embedded practice across the school.
- While across classrooms visited scaffolds were provided for students through tiered tasks, the opportunity to engage in deeper levels of discussion varied. For example, in a fourth grade class, students were asked to silently think in response to a question missing an opportunity to discuss with their partners; in a seventh grade class, students were given topics to discuss in their groups for 1 ½ minutes, thus curtailing emerging insights.
- Student work products and discussions in the classrooms visited reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. For example, in a sixth grade math class, students coached each other in graphing coordinate points. In an eighth grade ELA class, students discussed in their groups connotations within a paragraph and what those revealed about an author's point of view. However, across classrooms, there were missed opportunities for students to formulate questions to extend thinking, or assume responsibilities to ensure that their peers' voices were heard and incorporated into discussions and tasks.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

All curricula are standards-aligned with an emphasis on the instructional shifts and higher-order skills in a coherent way across grades and subject areas.

Impact

All students, including ELLs, and students with disabilities, are consistently exposed to higher-level tasks and are provided supports to access those tasks leading to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. A deliberate strategy was chosen to tap into the expertise of Common Core Fellows at the school to ensure that all curriculum documents explicitly include the Common Core instructional shifts by using the protocol for curriculum alignment used by the NYCDOE Common Core Fellows. Curricula for ELLs and students with disabilities were also vetted and adjusted to align to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts.
- Higher-order skills that require students to create meaning and solve real world problems are identified and embedded throughout curricula and tasks across grades and subjects. Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions at the higher levels are embedded in lesson plans.
- Curricula and academic tasks across grades and subjects are structured to challenge all students to think critically and demonstrate their thinking through cognitively engaging work products. In ELA units across grades, students are asked to integrate reading and writing to express their points of view or to create arguments. In math, students are asked to adhere to the standards of mathematical practice and to reason. In both ELA and math there are ample opportunities to write and engage in reflective and critical-thinking skills.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and professional development opportunities. Staff provides all students, including lower and higher achievers with feedback, guidance, and ongoing support that help to prepare them for college and career decisions.

Impact

The school has established a mutual accountability culture for learning and collaboration between staff, students, and families that fosters high expectations for all learners, including high-need subgroups leading to student progress towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has created a culture of professional learning through Teachscape by incorporating staff input which has allowed cohorts of teachers based on common needs and interests to collaboratively generate goals connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Within the cohorts, teachers engage in targeted professional learning through videos and online learning communities and support each other within a structure of mutual accountability for professional growth.
- To ensure collaborative investment in the development of schoolwide goals, teachers were brought together to have input on revising and refining the CEP goals. Teams of teachers had input in developing the action plans so that all staff members had an opportunity to craft goals which become embedded in the work of teacher teams leading to mutual accountability through peer feedback on instructional practice. One teacher stated, “We view our own team as a resource for growth”.
- The school is committed to the academic and social emotional development of students. To this end, there is an advisory program and a Social Emotional Learning team (SEL) to address student needs and promote student ownership of their educational experience. For example, the entire middle school elected a student action committee. That committee will be part of the school’s hiring committee in the spring. Advisory classes are grade specific and deal with themes of tolerance, anger management, and responsibility. To further ensure that all students have opportunities to meet school expectations, teachers (and other staff) also volunteer to serve as mentors for students who are at risk via an “each one reach one” program. Staff members are trained by the school social worker and help address student needs on an individual basis allowing students to be prepared academically and socially-emotionally for the next level.
- There are guidance and advisement services for all students with a unified set of high expectations that encourages students to maximize their educational experience including high-need subgroups. For example, the school has a partnership with Resources for Children With Special Needs that, in collaboration with the middle school guidance counselor, the SEL team and the grade eight teacher team, provides onsite workshops and individual support to all students with disabilities and their families in such areas as transition planning, and high school and career choices. This work has expanded this year to include the grade seven cohort of students with special needs.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in consistently examining teacher practice, assessment data, and student work within inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations to promote the implementation of the Common Core Learning standards.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence leading to continuous shared improvement of teacher practice and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers collaborate in professional teams where they develop and implement practices shared within a grade or a discipline, embedding Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. For example, the math teams have infused the standards for mathematical practice in their lessons and units.
- All teacher teams are structured around a four-week cycle that includes the systematic analysis of assessment data and student work, and culminates in an examination of observed trends regarding student mastery of goals and areas that need to be addressed in order to adjust classroom practice. For example, the seventh grade math team reviewed the unit post-test and found that students were grappling with graphing and reasoning skills. Therefore, teachers revised forthcoming lessons that now include an emphasis on the Common Core Standard of Mathematical Practice¹—Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. Real world math problems requiring graphing were designed and goals were set for student groups based on level of mastery. Instruction was modified to include strategies such as modeling ways to clarify what a task is asking by identifying key words, and including more writing so students can explain the meaning of a problem and find ways to solve it.
- Throughout the teacher teams, collaborations are structured using the school-developed Evidence of Student Learning (EvSL) protocol which is designed to cover a 4-5 session period of time during which student work and data are examined, strategies for adjusting instruction are devised, and goals for students at different levels of mastery are set. For example, when the first grade team discovered that students struggled with sounds and letters, the ELA curriculum was revised to enhance the writing piece. The third grade team developed explicit writing goals based on a review of student work and trends. These goals are posted in all third grade classes.
- Learning goals for groups of students are periodically developed based on a review of data and trends to define instructional targets and benchmark achievement targets. For example, group goals for two sixth grade classes included, “Identify the central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details” for the neediest group; “Determine an author’s point of view in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text”, for the group approaching standards level; “Determine the theme of a story by analyzing details within the text”, for the on-level group; and “Draw conclusions by close analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text”, for the above-level group.