



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The New American Academy**

**Elementary School X274**

**275 Harlem River Park Bridge  
Bronx  
NY 10453**

**Principal: Pepe Gutierrez**

**Date of review: April 30, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Leticia Rodriguez-Rosario**

## The School Context

The New American Academy is an elementary school with 528 students from grade pre-K through grade 3. The school population comprises 37% Black, 60% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 88.4%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Focus</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

All teachers are involved in structured professional collaborations that strengthen teacher instructional capacity. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect learning across the school.

### Impact

Embedded systems and structures for teacher teams and distributed leadership support student progress and teacher development.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has a unique teacher team model that supports all teachers. Each team is comprised of teachers at various stages of a four step career ladder (Apprentice, Associate, Partner, and Master Teacher). Master teachers lead meetings and support less experienced teachers. Each team also has a special education and English language learner specialist. The school day is structured to allow 90 minutes of teacher team collaboration every morning from 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.
- The Eagle leadership team is comprised of the principal and the Master teachers from each grade level team. This team meets weekly to discuss Common Core aligned curricula, the integration of the instructional shifts, school wide data, and trends in order to improve instruction. The team also focuses on strengths and areas of growth of individual teachers to develop leadership plans for each teacher.
- Teacher teams engage in the “Instructional Round” protocol including viewing of teacher’s practice, sharing observations, posing wonderings and questions for the focus teacher to answer, sharing individual learning, making individual commitments to modify instruction based on what was learned, and developing an implementation plan. This protocol promotes collaboration, ensures that the entire team walks away with a plan to improve their practice, and results in continuous progress towards professional goals for teachers.
- Teacher teams have systems that ensure that teachers self and peer monitor their work with a focus on accelerating student progress. As an example, during the observation of the first grade teacher team meeting, one team member shared a video of her practice during a math lesson. Participating teachers shared noticings, wonderings and next steps. Teachers discussed pedagogical moves for the presenting teacher and the teacher self-assessed, stating, “I pulled back in the beginning, but later I did not. I did not step back to hear the students.”

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school uses common assessments as well as checks for understanding to determine students' progress towards goals across grades and subjects. However there are missed opportunities to provide students with specific actionable feedback.

### Impact

Although, the school uses common assessments, rubrics and checks for understanding to monitor student progress, there are missed opportunities to provide students with specific next steps that can support them in becoming autonomous learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams develop and adapt Common Core aligned rubrics and checklists and administer pre and post unit tests to measure student progress across grades and subject areas. Assessments include, the Pre-assessment for Ready Gen Unit 3, Module A, an interdisciplinary unit test on Energy and Fountas and Pinnell Running Records which are administered three times a year to track student progress in reading.
- The school uses various tools to check for understanding. For example, teachers use wipe boards, exit slips, thumbs up / thumbs down, total physical response and conference notes to monitor students' daily progress. Teachers' conference notes include next steps for individual students. However, a few of the students interviewed were not aware of next steps for improving their learning.
- A review of student work revealed that students use checklist and rubrics to self-assess. For example a "Grade 1 Opinion/Narrative/Informational Writing Rubric", is used to evaluate progress in writing by students in grade 1. In a narrative unit, a first grade student wrote: "I did well by writing my feelings. I did well by putting punctuation at the end of a sentence." Another first grade student wrote comments such as: "I can improve spelling because I didn't know how to spell second. Next time I will look in the dictionary or ask a buddy. I should add more details. Adding details is important because if I don't nobody will know how it feels or how it looked like." However, feedback seen on a few students' work did not include teacher comments with actionable next steps other than the circling of components on a rubric.

## Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best, as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. All lessons strategically provide multiple entry points and high quality supports and extensions for diverse learners.

### Impact

All learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills in their work products. Lessons in all classrooms illustrate strategic use of multiple access points and lesson extensions to maximize learning by all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers group students strategically based on current data, with a focus on literacy and math. Students are then grouped heterogeneously during science and social studies to ensure that they have opportunities to work in flexible groups aligned to their needs. This was evident during classroom visits where push-in teachers were observed working with small groups of students.
- In a first grade math class consisting of students with disabilities, the students were observed working on problems involving base ten. The teacher worked with a group while the paraprofessional worked with a student on the floor. Students were challenged to find multiple ways to represent 2 tens and 7 ones. Students were also asked to agree or disagree with their peers. A challenge sheet was available for any student who wanted to try a more difficult problem and some students took advantage of that.
- In a kindergarten dual language class the teacher used hula hoops placed on the floor to illustrate how numbers could be regrouped ( $5=3+2$ ). Students began in the center hoop and separated to create equations. A student on the side recorded findings as the students moved in and out of the hoops. The teacher recorded how the students performed on an iPod. The teacher then asked the group looking on: "Do they look the same?"
- In a kindergarten literacy class, the teacher worked on developing team talk. Students sat in groups passing the 'mic' (a pen) as they responded to a question from the story, *Come on Rain*. The question was, "How do we know how the character feels at the end of the story?" The teacher walked around, monitored student discussion and provided the students with feedback. The feedback pushed students to demonstrate and share their thinking with peers when the teacher said, "Don't look at me; look at them. Tell them. Show where you found that."

**Findings**

School leaders and faculty integrate the instructional shifts with Common Core-aligned curricula, to ensure coherence and support students in preparation for college and career readiness. Curricula are modified using student work and data, allowing all learners to have access to cognitively engaging curricula and tasks.

**Impact**

All students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to cognitively engaging curricula that promotes college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school uses Common Core aligned ReadyGEN and Go Math! curricula which are supplemented by Engage NY for literacy and math. The New York City Scope and Sequence is used for science and social studies instruction.
- During a five week summer planning session school leaders and faculty use current student data, including data from Measures of Student Learning and Fountas and Pinnell assessments, along with the “Educators Evaluating the **Quality of Instructional Products**” (EquiP) rubric and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) template, to ensure that curricula is Common Core-aligned and integrates the instructional shifts across content areas and grades. The Hess’ Cognitive Rigor Matrix is used to support the designing of rigorous tasks. For example in a science unit about energy, second grade students researched the relationship between human behavior and the increase of volcanoes and earthquakes. The identification of causal relationships supports students’ preparedness for college and career.
- Weekly examination of lessons by teacher teams, which include English as a Second Language teachers and teachers of students with disabilities, teachers ensure alignment of the end task and adjustment of lessons to support all learners via scaffolds. Lesson and unit plans evidence modifications for students in the subgroups. Some of the scaffolds integrated into lesson and unit plans are leveled texts, explicit vocabulary instruction, visuals, technology, read alouds and think alouds. In the literacy unit entitled, “Observing the World Around Us”, teachers differentiated lessons by using different leveled texts, presenting key vocabulary with corresponding pictures, and creating tasks for students to act out some of the passages.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

The school's structures and support systems allow for the consistent communication of high expectations for learning across the school and the development of mutual accountability for these expectations. All staff members partner with families to support student progress in meeting expectations for college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

Teachers are well-supported towards and demonstrate shared accountability for success in meeting the school's high expectations. The school provides extensive supports for all families, leading to home-school partnerships that accelerate student achievement.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Based on the school the school leader's firm belief that high quality teachers are the greatest single determinant of students' academic success, high expectations for all staff begin with the school's hiring process. Candidates participate in a six step hiring process which includes a written application, phone interview, group unit building activity, panel interview, reference checks, and a demonstration lesson. Candidates are observed and assessed by parents, teachers and administrators. Candidates are vetted multiple times to evaluate their willingness to collaborate, learn and accept feedback, have high expectations of students and to ensure that they are a good fit for the school community. Frequent cycles of observation by administrators and the Master Teachers foster mutual accountability for attainment of all expectations.
- All Master Teachers receive continuous training to provide elbow-to-elbow coaching, support, and feedback to peers and to ensure best practices and rigorous instruction in all classrooms. Master Teacher Rounds, led by a consultant, ensures high expectations within each team and school wide, by providing a platform where Master Teachers support each other through the challenges of mentorship and meaningful feedback. They, in turn, support other staff by providing feedback and coaching.
- Tuesday morning meetings are dedicated to parent communication; teams hold meetings, conduct workshops for parents, and make phone calls, ensuring that they communicate high expectations and build partnerships with families that propel students toward college and career readiness. Teams also prepare a weekly newsletter that invites parents to stay informed with school events, initiatives, grade level learning targets and updates. Curriculum celebrations are held six times a year, with parents being invited to participate in planned activities that showcase students' learning across interdisciplinary units throughout the year. The celebrations not only inform parents about how interdisciplinary studies are designed to support high expectations for students but also serve to promote a home-school partnership that welcomes parent participation in students' learning in all grades and content areas.