



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Dr. Evelina López-Antonetty Children's Literacy
Center**

Elementary School X277

**519 St. Ann's Avenue
Bronx
NY 10455**

Principal: Sagrario Jorge

Date of review: February 4, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

The School Context

Dr. Evelina López-Antonetty Children’s Literacy Center is an elementary school with 496 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 24% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 11% 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 93.0%.

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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | Celebration | Well Developed |

Area of Celebration

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

Findings

Teacher engagement in weekly collaborations reflect teacher ownership of this process as they hold each other accountable and grow as 'public learners' together as they promote the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are intrinsic to the school.

Impact

Weekly collaborations amongst teachers result in thoughtful partners sharing practices and using reciprocal feedback for capacity building. Teacher leadership is effective as teachers make key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders provide ongoing feedback to team members to move their practice. For example, as teachers receive 'Glow and Grow' feedback from the leadership, they discuss these at their meetings in order to provide each other with a sampling of practices that lead to favorable classroom outcomes. Teachers open their classrooms for inter-visitations recognizing they are each other's best resources by validating their work for grade and content-wide coherence.
- Teachers have developed a common language as they plan and implement practices to improve instruction. According to teachers, this process allows them to find solutions in a collegial, risk-free process where all contributions are well-received, analyzed and discussed in depth in order to reach consensus on which strategies make sense to implement as a whole across grades or being strategic where differentiation will lead to further research on the impact of decisions made. For example, the designation of Academic Intervention Services (AIS) for individual teachers to take on during daily strategy group opportunities requires consistent tracking of student progress. Sharing the data with ongoing granular conversations on evidentiary progress are viable indicators of teacher growth and instructional maturation.
- The elements of distributive leadership are evident in the teacher-led collaborative meetings where instructional empowerment guides conversations and discussions on student learning and how to address the gaps that adversely impact on their academic achievement. Teachers review norms and establish the purpose of the meeting with allotted time to ensure that all participants have a voice in the process, share out their inferences, and, most importantly, delve into the implications for their practice. As teachers analyze student work, they determine how to integrate the needed skills into processes helping students demonstrate improvement and understanding of their work.
- Teachers attribute increased student achievement to the strong teamwork that has evolved and their keen focus on practices that work based on the evidence of the student products discussed during their ongoing meetings. The plethora of formative data that emerges from small strategically-grouped students contributes to teachers' in-depth conversations on student performance and a means for group reflection on how their authentic collaboration leads to the improvement of teaching and learning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The pedagogical belief in addressing the differentiated needs of all learners is evident in the curricula and instruction through multiple entry points in small group interactions and conferral opportunities between teachers and students. Additionally, students engage in peer reviews as they reflect on their authentic work.

Impact

Focused strategic instructional practices address the needs of all learners and results in varied modes of cognitive engagement for students to demonstrate their thinking and learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Students work in small groups solving math word problems with their peers. As part of the school-wide expectations, all students are expected to show their thinking as their peers listen carefully, take notes for self-reflection and provide feedback to the student speaker. Students' ability to articulate their thinking process using academic language is evidence of the school-wide focus on language development and academic discourse. For example, in a fourth grade ICT class, students work in pairs answering word problems. Students explain their reasoning for solving the problem. Concurrently, teachers also ensure to monitor these discussions to provide support for refinement of individual thinking processes.
- Teachers ask poignant questions as they challenge students to support their arguments with evidence that will convince their peers. For example, in a fifth grade class, students evaluate and decide on stronger arguments based on structure and development. Students then engage in meaningful debates 'pushing' each other's thinking by their own wonderings and questions. As they present their claims, students refer back to the text, thus demonstrating an understanding of the task on identifying strong arguments with evidentiary comprehension of the text at hand.
- All students read and write independently for an extensive time exposed with opportunities to build stamina and exercise creativity when sharing their work with their peers and teachers. Students in grade three engage in 'visible thinking' activities where they learn about geography, culture and economy through gallery walks to different learning stations, analyzing picturesque scenes of countries that provide visual context as they record their observations. These observations are ultimately used to write their authentic stories. This activity broadens students' knowledge of vocabulary and exposes them to contextual information that contributes to the development of their critical thinking skills. All classes are expected to engage in activities to spark creative thinking and in-depth discussions.
- Students use the classroom as an additional resource for work production. The vocabulary word wall and strategy charts are interactive resources used by students on a daily basis. For example, students across all grades refer to these resources as they write or engage in conversations with their peers. In a kindergarten class, during one-on-one conferral where teacher says: "Teach me about Spider Man" and repeatedly student turned to the resources on descriptive words or referred to seek additional evidence of learning in the classroom. This is an embedded practice across classrooms that contribute to student progress as they support their claims with detailed evidence.

Additional Findings

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|

Findings

School leaders provide training to staff and communication of high expectations is evident amongst staff, students and families. The culture for learning and the path to college and career readiness permeates in the daily interactions and partnership in support of those expectations.

Impact

The consistent message of high expectations leads to a unified voice and the reciprocal accountability of a persistent focus on instructional efficiency and academic excellence.

Supporting Evidence

- The promotion of excellence and a “no barriers” attitude in support of parents’ learning is clearly understood by staff and families. Families appreciate the personalized support structures in place where every student is being prepared for the next level. The ongoing communication of “No child left behind” also means that ‘no parent is to be left behind’ in the understanding of what it really means to be college and career ready. Parents proudly share that they see the difference in their children’s attitudes towards learning and support the school-wide expectations as partners by following up at home. Additionally, students articulate their future aspirations to a variety of professions due to the awareness created through school activities where students realize the importance of education and where it can take them.
- The constant evaluation and reflection on instructional time and learning outcomes are key indicators of the sense of urgency that is stressed and communicated to all. Students are expected to persevere in their learning by engaging in student-led discussions and projects related to topics studied in their particular classrooms. Self and peer feedback has contributed to students’ reflection on their own learning and the impact this has on their performance. Teachers hold them accountable to lesson outcomes leading to purposeful conversations on how this learning contributes to their personal growth, continued perseverance, and what it means for their future.
- The Danielson Framework for Teaching instructional expectations serve as a capacity-building springboard for teachers as they provide students with a high caliber of instructional practices and activities to effectively communicate with students how academic excellence prepares them for the exigencies of the 21st century and beyond. Some of the professional development focuses on norms and discussions on high expectations in classrooms as evidenced by student writing samples and teacher reflection at their collegial meetings or through observational feedback provided by the leadership and mutual accountability of peer teacher inter-visitations. Weekly interactions with parents also provide significant information on school-wide expectations and the importance of remaining connected to students’ overall performance.

Findings

Teachers and the school leader articulate how the instructional shifts and Common Core-aligned curricula, as well as performance tasks, engage all students in rigorous and higher-order skilled tasks.

Impact

The curriculum maps and units of study build coherence, promote college and career readiness, and emphasize rigor, while employing multiple entry points to ensure access for all students across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Students are provided with rigorous opportunities for learning where they articulate their thinking as they problem-solve with peers or as they work independently and write a reflective piece. For example, in first and second grades, students use a great amount of academic vocabulary to justify their thinking. The academic tasks require students to think critically and make their own meaning so that they can apply what they have learned in a relevant manner and demonstrate their understanding via group discussions or conferrals with teachers. This alignment has contributed to more coherent planning and teachers' awareness on how to construct instructional outcomes.
- The leadership and teachers have made purposeful decisions in embedding the habits of mind in the attainment of enduring understandings to build coherence as students are involved in routines and higher-order discussions that help move to the next levels of learning. For example, all lesson plans reviewed focus on helping students learn to find ways to produce knowledge and develop a critical stance habit of mind in order to delineate an enduring understanding that students will be able to figure out at the end of lesson with contextualized meaning.
- Teacher teams and consultants vertically plan to cross-pollinate across disciplines and connect the strategies that will help students accelerate to the next area of expected outcomes. For example, teachers determined to be more coherent with curricular planning documents needed to address instructional needs of English language learners and students with disabilities in order to build the level of learning and goal attainment, as delineated in the Common Core-aligned units. To that end, teachers purposefully incorporated multiple entry points for students across grades and subjects as evidenced by a document review of curriculum maps, scope and sequence, and lesson plans. Additionally, increased level of differentiation is evident across all classes, thus, developing a balance of strategies that lead to agreed-upon rigorous learning outcomes.

Findings

The school-wide use of common assessments, rubrics and grading policies assists teachers and service providers in the identification of students' specific needs in order to provide them with appropriate skills and strategies for instructional improvement. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

School leaders and teachers use varied assessments aligned to the curricula to provide students with actionable feedback while resulting in improved outcomes. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers effectively analyze data to measure student progress and next steps. As they norm their formative assessment process, they identify specific instructional approaches that may be refined to meet the differentiated needs of all learners. For example, in first and fourth grade classes, the teachers determine student grouping based on the formative assessment results represented on a school-wide data sheet with unit-specific standards. This data-determined flexible grouping is evident across classes as these data points inform the strategic groups of students, thus imparting customized instruction based on data results. The ongoing conferrals and analysis of formative data provide teachers with much information to make daily adjustments to conform to students' needs.
- Teachers consistently check for understanding to ensure that students are on track with their learning. This is consistently done during independent work time. The majority of classes visited, teachers checked for understanding with lesson adjustments effectively done to sustain the learning and continuously improve instruction.
- Students articulate how teachers provide actionable feedback to their work and assessment results via the use of rubrics and checklists to assist with the acceleration of their learning. In student portfolios and bulletin boards, student work is displayed with teacher feedback that is rubric-based. For example, there is evidence of differentiated teacher feedback with substantial next steps which students take wholeheartedly to "improve their skills and become a true talent in reading and writing" as indicated by a fourth grader. Students demonstrate understanding how this feedback contributes to their progress as they describe specific strategies they must hone in on to expand their learning. Students articulate what they need to revise by the use of checklist. Subsequently, teachers actively involve students in their own data for input. Students keep track of their rubric scores and feedback understanding they must "pick up the pace" for continued improvement.