



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Walton School**

**Elementary School X294**

**1425 Walton Ave  
Bronx  
NY 10452**

**Principal: Daniel Russo**

**Date of review: March 4, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Claudy Makelele**

## The School Context

The Walton School is an elementary school with 336 students from grade K through grade 3. The school population comprises 21% Black, 73% Hispanic, 3% White and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 36% English language learners and 15% 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 92.3%.

## 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>Proficient</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>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>
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### Findings

Teachers collaborate in structured teacher teams to analyze assessment data and student work. Teachers have voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Impact

Teacher team work has resulted in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students. Distributive leadership structures build leadership capacity in teachers.

### Supporting Evidence

- Eighty four percent (84%) of classroom teachers participate in inquiry-based curriculum planning for three hours per week after school. Teachers refine teaching points and scaffolding strategies as they plan together as a team. They use performance assessments and accompanying rubrics as the basis of unit planning. Units are edited and revised before, during and after they are taught, based on the student work samples. During a team meeting, at the conclusion of reviewing student work, teachers discussed implications for instruction for the two students who fell into the “slippables” group and those who were solid Level 2s. All teachers suggested strategies to improve the performance of the students discussed.
- Professional collaborations between teachers include mentoring for new teachers. A partnership with the New Teacher Center brings allows mentors to co-plan with their mentees, model lessons for them, look at student work and/or data, and accompany mentees on inter-visitations where they debrief the observed lesson as “thinking partners”. Through a similar partnership a Bilingual Team works with other staff to embed supports for task completion into units of instruction across content areas. For example, in a unit which required second grade students to read about Theodore Roosevelt, the Bilingual team incorporated Spanish texts about heroes and politicians while the English as a Second Language teacher identified resources about nature and parks.
- During both teacher team meetings, teachers articulated that school leaders promote an environment where teacher team decisions drive the work of school improvement. For example, one classroom on each grade level was turned into a discussion lab site, with instructional activities facilitated by teacher leaders. The lab site teachers developed a “Discussion Continuum”, which identifies “look fors” for their colleagues when they visit and outlines the steps necessary to build strong student discussion. In addition, a literacy coach works with science/social studies cluster teachers to help them design performance tasks and align their rubrics with those used in the English Language Arts units. Further, a Manhattan College-funded teacher study group allows teachers to collaborate in refining curricula to raise the rigor of math instruction in the school.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned to the school's curricula and serve as the basis for feedback on student performance. Common assessments are used to determine student progress towards goals and instructional moves to accelerate student achievement.

### Impact

Assessments across grades and subjects result in teachers providing actionable feedback to students and using the findings from assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers of all content specialties submit electronic data sheets for administrative review. Analysis of students' Fountas and Pinnell levels, scores on performance tasks, math scores, and results of Native Language Arts assessments provide data that is reviewed during team meetings, including School Leadership Team meetings, and used to inform adjustments to instruction and the allocation of school resources for interventions.
- Classroom visits and meetings with teachers indicated that the school uses data from assessments to group students. Students take the "Show What You Know" pre-assessment and the results are analyzed and sorted into commonly deficient skills. This provides teachers with data about student progress, which they share with students and use as a roadmap for those who are struggling and require intervention during small-group instruction time. However assessment data viewed does not show a clear picture of student mastery of learning goals across all content areas.
- Second and third grade teachers recently indicated that the *Go Math* "Show What You Know" assessment does not contain enough high-order word problems. Based on this, teacher teams on those grades decided to create supplemental word problems that are paired with the "Show What You Know" tasks to create stronger pre-assessments in second and third grade. However, across grades and content areas adjustments such as this one do not yet lead to all students demonstrating increased mastery of learning targets.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Teachers refine and implement Common Core aligned curricula across grades and subjects. Using student work and data, teachers develop units with tasks designed to cognitively engage all learners across grades and subjects.

### Impact

All students have access to curricula and academic tasks that support development of college and career readiness skills for all students. Ongoing refinement of tasks based on student work and data leads to instruction that targets students' diverse needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school focuses on the Common Core Standards instructional shift of writing from sources to support students in making claims. In alignment to that, English Language Arts units require students to engage in fiction and non-fiction genre studies in 3-4 week cycles and science and social studies instruction is grounded in grade-level non-fiction texts and primary source documents. In addition, teachers work collaboratively to embed sample high-level discussion prompts directly into the English Language Arts units of study. Texts such as *Go Math* further contribute to Common Core aligned curricula by offering students access to problem solving tasks that reflect the instructional shifts.
- When units of study are completed, the curriculum team sits with all members of the grade and participates in a "table read" during which non-participating teachers ask clarifying questions of the team. The end goal of the table read is that teachers can articulate how each and every teaching point in the unit builds students' skills and knowledge needed to complete the culminating unit task. Members of a Bilingual Team work with core teachers to ensure alignment of English Language Arts, English as a Second Language, and Native Language Arts curricula for subgroups of students. For example, these teachers' research internet and print resources that are used to frontload English as a Second Language content to improve English Language Learners' access to English Language Arts content.
- The school makes adjustments to the curriculum in order to tailor it to the needs of all students. For example after implementing a unit of study, teachers examine the student products, identify areas that need further support and collaboratively work to revise the unit to address students' learning needs. They use protocols for looking at student work to identify and share low inference observations to inform revision of curricula and tasks. As they look at the student work samples, they analyze student thinking, determine gaps in learning based on the targeted standards and make curriculum revisions and refinements three to four times a year.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Teaching practices aligned to curricula reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best and are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Lessons consistently provide multiple entry points and engage learners in challenging tasks.

### **Impact**

Across classrooms, teaching practices result in supports that contribute to all learners being engaged in tasks that push their thinking across grades and content areas.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- A variety of leveled literacy intervention activities such as guided reading, small group instruction and writing conferences provide multiple entry points to learning for all students. For example, in a second grade class students grouped by levels worked with peers to complete the assigned task while the teacher worked with a targeted group of other students. The teacher targeted those students based on her conferencing notes and their varied levels of comprehension of the plot of the story.
- The school focuses on the Common Core instructional shift of writing from sources to support students in making claims. For example, second grade students engaged in learning about technology advancements by reading books on “typewriters vs. computers” and “woodstoves vs. furnaces”. They were required to use evidence from their reading to respond to the question, “How do advances in technology affect our daily lives?”
- Across classrooms teachers use varied methods to support the engagement of students in challenging tasks. For example in math lessons observed, Common Core aligned problems of the day were used to stimulate student thinking at the very beginning of the lessons. Further, students were exposed to multistep word problems in lessons that reflected applications of real-world learning experiences. Additionally, math journal writing is used for students to practice writing across all content areas, using academic vocabulary to summarize what they learn daily.

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

School leaders communicate high expectations to faculty members and provide them with training in the elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teacher teams interconnect staff and families, with staff members offering families ongoing and detailed information about expectations for their children’s progress in learning.

### Impact

Implemented structures that support high expectations assure a culture of accountability for effective teaching and learning across the school. Families consistently benefit from information and supports that empower them to help their children make progress in meeting high expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- *The Walton Weekly* outlines school events and due dates as well as curriculum topics across all grades and subjects, setting clear expectations for cohesive instruction across the school. Additionally, tools such as bulletins, staff meetings, professional development workshops, handouts emphasizing instructional expectations aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and formal and formal observations followed by one to one conferences, further specify high expectations for teaching and learning. Staff members are also held accountable for high expectations related to students’ safety and conduct and classroom environments that effectively support learning. “Shout-outs” are given to teachers who go above and beyond their professional responsibilities in meeting the expectations.
- Parent Instructional Rounds are held monthly, in which parents sit for a short presentation about a subject area within the instructional model of the school. Teachers accompany parents on instructional rounds through a series of classrooms and have a debrief conversation with them afterwards. During these conversation parents ask clarifying questions and identify new understanding of the school’s expectations for their children’s learning, and how the school implements instruction across content areas and grades. Each teacher also facilitates weekly meetings with families at designated times on Tuesdays, allowing families to have regular access to information about their children and supports that help them work with their children on assignments.
- “Class Dojo”, an electronic application, is used across all classrooms to monitor student behavior via the addition and subtraction of points based on negative or positive behaviors. Parents are connected to the “Class Dojo” and can see students’ daily tally in real-time, along with an explanation for why students gained or lost points. The application allows for direct messaging between the teacher and parent who share information on the student’s progress in meeting expectations for learning, conduct and attendance. Each teacher also creates a weekly classroom newsletter that is sent home, outlining the topics of study in the major content areas and the weekly homework given to students.