Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The School of Science and Applied Learning

Elementary X300

2050 Prospect Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Venessa Singleton

Date of review: January 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell

The School Context

The School of Science and Applied Learning is an elementary school with 642 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 39% Black, 59% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.3%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
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**	**Developing**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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	**Celebration**	**Proficient**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide ongoing professional development. School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations and offer ongoing feedback to students and families.

Impact
As a result, the staff is accountable to those expectations and parents understand the expectations for their children.

Supporting Evidence

- Based on last year's observation data, school leaders have focused professional development and teacher feedback on the question/discussion and assessment components of Danielson's Framework for Teaching and Learning. Faculty stated that school leaders hold them accountable for their individual and team decisions through their observations and provides them with timely written feedback.

- School leaders establish a culture for learning through the formal and informal observation cycle as well as professional development support for teachers. Following a post-observation conference, teachers receive individualized professional support that includes an intervisitation schedule with objectives, and future professional development opportunities connected to the teacher's identified area of growth. School leaders hold teachers accountable for these professional development trainings by returning to the classroom to see the implementation of the training.

- School leaders and faculty communicate with parents via bulletins, phone messenger, parent events, and the school parent webpage. The parent webpage includes curricular overviews and weekly homework assignments per grade, to keep parents informed about what's going on in the classroom. It also informs parents of school events, workshops, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings, and School Leadership Team (SLT) meetings. Recent parent workshops have focused on Common Core Learning Standards, middle school transition, and supporting reading at home.

- Teachers use Class Dojo to communicate with parents daily about student progress. Parents stated that using the Class Dojo application on their phone has made it much easier for them to contact their children's teacher and that teachers respond quickly.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across the classrooms, teaching practices unevenly aligned to the school core beliefs, Danielson Framework, and the Common Core shifts. Opportunities for high levels of student discussions are inconsistent.

Impact
The schools' uneven implementation of their shared beliefs is resulting in student discussion and work products demonstrating uneven levels of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders stated the use of assessment is an instructional focus for this school year. Across classrooms observed, teachers engaged students in whole group and small group discussion, but in some classrooms, the objective of the discussion did not align clearly with the objective of the lesson. For example, in multiple classrooms teachers asked students to develop questions about a text before reading, but then stated the purpose of asking questions was to do more research on a topic later with other resources. This did not allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the text they were using or allow the teacher to assess students on any particular skill.

- Across classrooms observed, most teachers provided differentiated materials to groups of students, but many tasks did not offer students an opportunity to discuss their work or provide for a way to assess their own work. In one 2nd grade math class, students were given an assignment from the workbook to start and then a menu of choices when they completed the problem set. The teacher sat with students on the rug to teach a mini-lesson to a small group. Students worked independently in their workbooks. In another class, 3rd grade English language arts, students were asked to write a sequence of events for something that happened at school and used an unrelated rubric to guide their work. Students were unable to demonstrate their thinking and had difficulty completing the task.

- Some teachers connected their lesson objective to their task and group work discussion to allow students the opportunity to demonstrate their thinking. For example, in one 5th grade math class students worked in groups to solve a problem using manipulatives. Students use appropriate vocabulary to support their reasoning to their classmates. The teacher required students to share their group thinking during class share out. However, in other classrooms, such as another 5th grade classroom during an English language arts lesson, the teacher dominated the class discussion with limited input from students or opportunities for extended thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. The written curricula consistently emphasize higher-order thinking skills across grades and content areas.

Impact
All students, including students with disabilities and English language learners have access to rigorous tasks and curricula promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a common unit map template that includes essential questions, Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, knowledge targets, student assessment, and supports for ELLs and students with disabilities. For example, within a 5th grade English Language Arts (ELA) unit students were asked to complete an informational essay using text-evidence from multiple sources.

- Lesson plans differentiate activities for students both by including technology extensions for some students and by modifying group tasks some that students with disabilities and English language learners can demonstrate higher order thinking and have an entry point into the lesson. In most classrooms, groups of students were working on computers on teacher designated lessons from resources such as i-Ready, and other online materials. Lesson plans showed teachers identified skills or standards on which students needed to improve. Written tasks promote higher order skills for all students including Ells and students with disabilities. For example, in a 2nd grade classroom during English Language Arts groups had differentiated worksheets providing some students with more supports such as key vocabulary, and sentence starters while other student's worksheets provided no supports and extension questions.

- The school has adopted curricula from Ready-Gen, Superkids, and Go Math. Curricula emphasize academic vocabulary, writing from sources, and balancing informational and literary text. Based on student data the school has included more opportunities for students to write from sources and have included on-demand writing assessments in every unit to engage students as well as unit performance tasks.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Effective actionable feedback to students using a rubric is inconsistent across classrooms. The school is developing the use of analyzing common assessment data across grades and content areas.

Impact
All students are not able to monitor their progress over time. The lack of consistently analyzing data is resulting in limited curricula and instructional adjustments to support student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teacher feedback on written work was inconsistently aligned to the rubric or did not give students clear next steps on how to improve. During the student interview students could not speak to what they needed to improve upon in their class. They brought with them a data binder and a student said that "it contained all of their work since they've been at the school", but also said that they didn't use it, "it was for the teacher." When asked about feedback and goals one student responded "a goal is to be better in math and not make simple mistakes," and another student responded "my goal is to be a better reader by reading lots of books."

- The school uses a variety of common assessments through the curricula, running records, and Schoolnet, but teachers do not yet consistently use assessment results and student work products to effectively modify units and instruction. For example, during a 4th grade ELA meeting, teachers discussed a recent common assessment. Using only the item analysis teachers spoke to general best practices without looking collaboratively into the student work. One outcome from the meeting was to focus more time on compare and contrast in unit 3.

- Teacher feedback posted on student work and in student work folders is inconsistent across grades with comments that do not always align to the rubric or provide students with actionable next steps. For instance, in a 4th grade classroom many student essays had comments such as "complete writing process" and other comments spoke to the length of time students took to complete the assignment.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing

Findings
The majority of teachers work collaboratively in teams to look at student work and assessment data, but teams are developing an inquiry approach to their process.

Impact
The teacher team work is resulting in limited improved teacher practice and progress of goals for groups of students over time.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet for common planning during a double period once a week to discuss assessment data and look at student work, but the outcomes and action plans from those meetings have not yet resulted in consistent improved teacher practice or student achievement. A review of recent agendas and meeting minutes revealed that teachers focus on actions for individual students, and there is no tracking of performance over time for groups of students. For example, an action plan for a student is “more fun writing, things he enjoys to do”.

- In team meetings, teachers take turns presenting to their colleagues on a monthly basis, but the focus of the group inquiry does not yet allow teachers to capture a clear understanding of student’s next steps. For instance, in one team’s planner the purpose of the group was to “discuss strategies that can be used to encourage students to produce a piece of writing; next steps; possible academic interventions”.

- During an observation of a 4th grade team meeting, some teachers had assessment data from Schoolnet and some did not, and student work was not part of the meeting observed. Teachers shared general trends in the data and general strategies to address gaps in student understanding.