



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Pablo Neruda Academy

High School X305

**1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: David Liu

**Date of review: November 13, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Amanda Lurie**

The School Context

Pablo Neruda is a high school with 343 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 68% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 65% of the students enrolled and girls account for 35%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 82.0%

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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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		
<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	Proficient
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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings:

The majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations on teams, using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning

Impact

Most teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations that are carefully structured to promote achievement of school goals and help them to effectively implement the Common Core Learning Standards school-wide.

Supporting Evidence

- An instructional cabinet, made up of lead teachers, the principal and assistant principals, collaborate weekly to create agendas for department and grade team meetings for the following Friday. The Friday department and grade level team meetings, agendas and notes are reviewed weekly by the instructional cabinet to create future agendas, look at trends, and drive school-wide professional learning.
- Department meetings, led by subject area lead teachers, are used to review unit plans and curriculum maps to ensure that they are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and incorporate the school's literacy framework across each subject and grade. There is a peer review process, and a Google Docs platform that allows for peer feedback for each unit plan, as well as a continuous cycle of updates and revisions.
- An assessment analysis cycle occurs in grade teams, four times a year, using a school-created template and protocol to review assessment data, look at student writing, and create professional development that supports improved delivery of instruction, and goal setting.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings:

In a majority of classrooms, curricula and academic tasks inconsistently encourage higher-order skills across grades and subjects, and for a variety of learners.

Impact:

The school's curricular decisions are approaching, but not consistently building coherence around higher order thinking and college and career readiness. As a result, most of the academic tasks afford students limited support, do not always promote rigorous habits or higher order thinking, thus impeding access to curricula for all learners and subgroups.

Supporting Evidence

- While some of the curriculum maps and unit plans developed by the school are aligned to the instructional shifts and Common Core Learning Standards, many of the tasks and questions embedded in the units and plans were consistently at the lower end of the Depth of Knowledge Scale.
- Tasks were often created around materials and text that were low interest, low Lexile level, and not age appropriate. Additionally, materials that were challenging and grade appropriate lacked the necessary scaffolds to support English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, in one math class students worked in groups, for fifteen minutes, on a word problem that required only a basic knowledge of the math subject being taught. Some students were confused by unclear directions that the teacher provided, while others quickly solved the problem and were disengaged in their groups for the rest of the activity. Conversely, in one English class, more advanced students were reading text from a play aloud, and answering questions generated by the teacher, while a large group of students appeared disengaged, with their books closed. No scaffolds or supports were provided that would allow students to access and engage in productive struggle with the challenging text.
- Writing tasks and assignments often lacked rubrics, did not ask students to cite evidence, frame arguments, or make cognitive connections between prior themes and learning. Teachers often provided minimal feedback grounded in the technical aspects of writing, not on depth of knowledge. Students were not given consistent opportunities to explain why they received a grade, what they could do to improve, nor was there sufficient evidence of a self or peer editing process that moved students toward final draft quality work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings:

Pedagogy provides inconsistent instructional support, including the inconsistent use of questioning, discussion techniques and strategic entry points, and varied use of extensions to foster deep reasoning in student work products.

Impact:

Across classrooms, there was inconsistent evidence of curricula extensions to support students in producing meaningful work products. There were missed opportunities for all learners, including student subgroups, to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- While students were consistently working in groups across classrooms, they lacked the independence needed to effectively complete the tasks that were assigned. Student interactions were often limited to the classroom teacher “dropping by” and providing direct teacher support, but most students were unable to support one another, engage in high-level discussions or collective problem-solving. For example, in a science class, students were working on a lab in a group. With the exception of one group, most of the groups could not start the assignment without teacher support. Some were unclear on the directions, and others were unclear on what the task was asking them to do. When the teacher left the group, students often stopped working, or went back to working independently, rather than solving problems as a group, or asking a group member for help.
- In all classrooms visited, the teacher served as a gatekeeper of the information and questioning, with students participating in class discussions by responding to teacher-generated questions and prompts. Students did not generate their own questions, nor did they respond to peer answers. In an Advanced Placement United States History and Government class, for example, students were asked questions that came from a handout on juries that had only low-level comprehension questions and contained no parts that pushed students toward higher-level thinking. There were missed opportunities for more rigorous and deeper questioning, as the teacher asked only basic recall questions, such as “What is a jury?” and “What does “peer” mean?” followed by a brief independent reading.
- Materials provided to students, in some cases, provided scaffolds and multiple entry points for student with disabilities and English language learners, such as highlighted academic vocabulary, and graphic organizers; however, there were few opportunities for extensions that would challenge all learners. In a 9th grade math class, for example, students were engaged in solving the same problem. Problems were not tiered, nor were there additional, differentiated problems to challenge more advanced students.

Findings:

The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure student progress. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact:

The systems to monitor progress through data analysis as well as during instruction are inconsistently used to guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- An assessment cycle is used to review student work and assessment data, however, teachers indicated that there is no expectation to develop common assessments. Assessments are reviewed and peer feedback is provided as part of the unit plan review, however, clear and consistent benchmarks for what students are expected to know across grades and subject areas are inconsistent.
- The school uses what they call a Pablo Neruda Academy (PNA) process that was created during their data cycle by teachers and with their instructional partner, the Institute for Student Achievement, as a way for teachers to engage in ongoing checks for understanding during lessons. Classroom visits, however, inconsistently reflected the use of the PNA process. In classrooms where the end of the lesson was observed, the use of exit slips, a final summary, or other techniques to assess student understanding were not observed.
- The use of rubrics, to allow students to self-monitor and self-assess were not seen in a majority of classrooms. The rubrics that were observed more often focused on the technical aspects of student work, such as grammar, or the number of facts cited, rather than on depth of knowledge. In one class, an example of students work displayed in the classroom was a group project where students had to make a map and write a brief report on one of the 50 states. The rubric displayed for the assignment allowed for a group to receive a "4", the highest grade possible, if "all aspects of the project were complete and correct" and the assignment showed "independent thinking". "Independent thinking" was not defined within the rubric, nor did projects consist of anything more than a recall of facts about the chosen state.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings:

The school establishes a culture for learning that communicates high expectations. The school has created structures and systems to regularly monitor progress, communicate with families, and improve college access and career readiness.

Impact:

Structures that support the school’s high expectations build buy-in amongst parents, students and staff alike. Constituents share a mutual understanding of what high expectations look like with regard to attendance, culture, college and career readiness, and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents and students shared that they are provided with on-going and consistent feedback. Feedback often occurs in the form of one-on-one meetings, with data and information tailored to the specific needs of the student, such as academic progress and attendance.
- The school uses data systems such as Skedula and Pupil Path to monitor progress and track graduation. Additionally, the school uses a Google Docs platform to capture all student work and create transparency that allows teachers, administration, parents and students to view student progress in real time.
- Parents and students shared that they are engaged in the college process upon entering the school in grade 9. College trips, financial aid workshops, meetings and assemblies are held for students in all grades to promote college awareness and provide information and access to the college process for all students and families.
- All students are given a student handbook, with clear expectations around behavior, grading policies, points of contact, and information on how to access the school’s resources. Additionally, seniors are provided with a handbook that outlines expectations for senior year. Assemblies are held to go over information within the handbooks. Student reported that the handbooks are helpful, and that their advisors remind them of important information and events. Students also reported that their advisors are critical to their academic achievement, regularly monitor their progress, and discuss strategies that help them to be successful.