



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

School of Leadership Development

Intermediate School X313

**1600 Webster Ave
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Earl Brathwaite

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

The School Context

The School of Leadership Development is a middle school with 348 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 28% Black, 70% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89.9%.

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	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	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		
<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	Celebration	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The school leader communicates high expectations for professionalism and instruction aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, and is developing a system of accountability for those expectations. School leaders, teachers, and other staff communicate high expectations for all students and are implementing varied supports to help students meet the expectations.

Impact

Staff and students are not yet provided with the level of support needed to ensure their success in meeting the school's high expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leader communicates high expectations to staff through a staff handbook and weekly memos outlining school goals and action plans. The principal has outlined roles and responsibilities for all administrative team members and he meets with them regularly to ensure compliance with professional expectations aligned to school goals.
- All teachers are engaged in ongoing professional development and collaborations through which they are beginning to assume responsibility for meeting established expectations. For example, all professional development activities are aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the Quality Review rubric and include workshops on building a culture of learning that communicates high expectations such as “using assessment in instruction, designing coherent instruction, and planning and preparation”.
- Frequent cycles of observation and data meetings are being used to begin to hold teachers accountable for expectations regarding staff and students' progress towards school goals. For example, feedback on observations communicates explicit expectations for improved teaching and learning, as seen on an observation report which read as follows: “I recommend that you use and require students to use the Hess question stems that are displayed inside the classroom and monitor that through a point system until the language becomes part of the way that they (the students) question and discuss in the class”.
- The school has developed a Student/Parent Handbook that outlines expectations related to students' academic and social behaviors. Students shared that they are aware of the expectations for academic performance and social behaviors and the school celebrates student accomplishments, providing students with motivation to meet established expectations. The school also uses interim progress reports to provide students with feedback on their current performance and next steps and is in the process of creating a system whereby students can explore high school opportunities and be prepared for their next level. For example, the guidance team arranged an eighth grade assembly where high school opportunities were reviewed with students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Teacher practices across classrooms do not consistently provide all learners with opportunities to engage in rich discussions and produce meaningful work products.

Impact

Teaching practices reflect uneven engagement of students in appropriately challenging tasks and high level discussions that allow them to consistently demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal has observed trends in teacher practice and has followed up with an instructional goal focused on building students' reading stamina and engaging students in partnerships and shared learning. The principal has also shared accountable talk stems with teachers and expects all teachers to engage students in peer to peer discussions. However, although students in some classes were observed working in pairs or groups during a portion of the lesson, across the classes visited there were inconsistent levels of student participation in discussions. For example, in a 7th grade math lesson on unknown angles, students were engaged in peer to peer discussion and extending one another's learning. By contrast, in an English as a Second Language class where students were asked to identify figurative language in the poem *Hope and Fog*, the pattern of interaction was call and response, with the teacher calling on a few students and those students responding directly to the teacher.
- Although most lesson plans showed attention to planning for multiple entry points to allow all learners to access curricula and tasks, observation of instruction in classrooms reflected inconsistent implementation of supports for diverse learners. For example, in an eighth grade English class where students were grouped by Lexile levels, the teacher provided visual cues, sentence stems, and academic vocabulary support, as the students engaged in classifying textual evidence on what led to the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, in a sixth grade English class on inference and author's perspective on *The Lost Garden and Dragonwings*, similar supports were not evident for students who were all expected to complete a graphic organizer. In this class not all students engaged in the task and some remained unclear as to how to complete the task.
- During a sixth grade math class on the "Distributive Property" the teacher was observed thinking aloud and using self-questioning. However when the students were sent off to work in differentiated groups, peer to peer discussion was limited and some students were unclear as to next steps. The teacher moved around the room, checking in on groups and clarifying misunderstandings for some students. Other students sat waiting for the teacher to come over and did not receive support in advancing their work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Developing

Findings

School leaders are in the process of aligning curricula in all subject areas to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and instructional shifts. There is some evidence that the school is working to ensure all students have access to curricula and tasks.

Impact

The use of student work and data in the planning and refinement of curricula does not yet promote access to cognitively engaging learning experiences for diverse learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The instructional team is in the process of adopting curricula across all content that is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and incorporates the instructional shifts. However, while some lessons provide students with opportunities to engage in Common Core aligned tasks such as argumentative writing and demonstrating mathematical understandings, other lessons do not incorporate the instructional shifts. For example, in a sixth grade math lesson plan showed that students were required to apply the properties of operations to generate equivalent expressions, work cooperatively to generate solutions to the problems and justify their solutions with evidence. A lesson plan for a grade 6 math class for special education students did not include similar opportunities for students to engage with their peers or to justify their thinking.
- The principal has established key instructional foci of student partnerships and engaging students in “Depth of Knowledge” questioning and the Teachers College writing process. However across instructional units, the tasks provided for group and partner work by students did not reflect attention to strategies for facilitating high levels of student engagement in learning across content areas and grades. In addition, most lesson plans reviewed did not consistently indicate how teaching practices and lesson content will be tailored to support individual student needs or enable English Language Learners or students with disabilities to fully access curricula and tasks.
- Although some teachers’ lesson plans indicated planning for tiered tasks, this was not consistent across classrooms. For example in a sixth grade English class on Laurence Yep’s, *The Lost Garden*, the lesson plan indicated that students would be assigned one of three tasks; analyzing words and phrases from the text; analyzing paragraphs from the text; or searching for clues throughout the text. By contrast, a plan for an English as a Second Language lesson on narrative writing, where students would be expected to note and illustrate the words that come to mind when they think of their native country, did not indicate any targeted supports for the diverse learners in this class to allow them to engage successfully in the task.

Findings

Common assessments, rubrics and the school's grading policy are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers inconsistently use checks for understanding as part of their instructional practice.

Impact

There is limited constructive feedback to students about their performance and progress and assessment practices do not promote effective adjustments to lessons based on data about students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has developed a uniform grading policy that incorporates data from formative and summative assessments. However, as the formula contains a number of elements across content areas, the information provided to teachers and students does not always provide clear and accurate feedback on students' strengths and learning needs. For example, the school wide grading policy includes a participation component that represents 20% of the course grade. However, across classrooms, teachers were not observed determining a grade for student participation, and students in classes could not articulate how their participation grade would be determined.
- The instructional team is engaged in the ongoing process of refining assessments and rubrics and teachers are beginning to use the resulting data to identify student learning needs and inform next instructional steps. Some teacher feedback on student work provided clear next steps to move students from one level to the next and is aligned to a task specific rubric. For example, some rubrics displayed on bulletin boards throughout the school provided feedback to students regarding next learning steps. However, in other instances, feedback was not aligned to the task and/or rubric and teacher feedback consisted of comments such as, "Your work must be neater", or "Improve the organization." On some math work, feedback consisted of a check and / or "X" only. Further, across classrooms, students were also not observed accessing tasks via content specific rubrics or engaging in self/peer assessment.
- Across classrooms visited, some teachers were observed checking for understanding through individual or group conferencing. However, in other classrooms, checks for understanding were limited to general questions posed to the whole class, such as, "Does anyone have questions?", or "Does everyone get that?" In addition, teachers were not observed recording formative assessment data during classes observed. During a team meeting teachers shared that the assessment process does not yet consistently incorporate strategies such as memorializing formative assessment data and using that data to inform adjustments to instruction.

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

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in content area professional collaborations that are beginning to support the attainment of school goals, including implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Through team analysis of student work and data, teachers are developing ways to improve their pedagogy and accelerate student progress towards learning goals.

Impact

Teachers' involvement in professional collaborations and data driven learning is beginning to impact positively on teacher practice and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade level teams meet regularly in professional learning teams where, at times, they examine student work and data, identify student learning needs in relation to the Common Core standards and discuss goals for students. For example, the sixth grade team was observed discussing the strategies that teachers use to group students during instruction. However, members of this team were not able to clearly articulate the impact of their work on shared teacher practice or student outcomes.
- A review of agendas and minutes provide evidence that teachers meet regularly. However, these agendas and minutes indicate that not all teachers engage in an inquiry approach in which they collaboratively target specific students, especially the most struggling learners, analyze outcomes for the students to measure growth in their performance, identify next steps and follow up on peer recommendations for improving levels of achievement for all students.
- A review of agendas and minutes indicates a lack of protocols and strategies to approach the work of analyzing data in a streamlined and focused manner to heighten the impact of teamwork on student and teacher progress. For example, the January 6, 2015 grade seven/eight meeting agenda outlines that the team will analyze students' performance on the mid-unit writing assessment which many students failed. However, there was no evidence of a protocol or system to engage in error analysis of the results of the assessment and some teachers had not yet finished the grading of the exam.