



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Concourse Village Elementary School

Elementary School X359

**750 Concourse Village West
Bronx
NY, 10451**

Principal: Alexa Sorden

Date of review: December 19, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

The School Context

The Concourse Village Elementary School is an elementary school with 273 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade three. The school population comprises 34% Black, 62% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% American Indian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. 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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings:

Curricula and tasks are reflective of rigorous habits planned and refined using student work and data intended to meet the needs of all learners.

Impact:

The curricula across all subject areas engage all learners, inclusive of English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, resulting in students demonstrating higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- All content areas are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards with the use of technology as an instructional and interactive tool. The variety of resources, teacher-created modules and exemplars engage students in performance tasks that are rigorous in nature, thereby, challenging all students to think critically and articulate their learning. For example, curricular delineates individual student presentations to peers on SMARTboards with annotations made as they edited non-fiction work and/or substantiate their claims. In addition, math curricula designs small group discussions regarding how to solve varied word problems where students engage and assume different roles and hold each other accountable to the task at hand.
- All units, maps, modules and plans address the Common Core Learning Standards and reflect enduring understandings, essential questions, learning intentions and scaffolds driven by the instructional shifts. This evidentiary coherence of curricula leads to students' ability to make connections across content areas relative to the school-wide core values, thus granting access to cognitively engaging tasks appropriate at all grades. The refinement of the curricula and the planning of academic tasks provide teachers with rigorous tools that assist all learners in visualizing their learning with enhanced vocabulary as evidenced by improved student work. For example, this year, as the school expanded to grade three, the school leader and teachers ensure to plan lessons that require students to build on last year's learned skills. The process known as "So what, so why, and now what" has been implemented in third grade for students' reflection on their own next steps towards learning, increased class participation and standards-based work products that demonstrate fluency and mastery leading to independence.
- The school-wide adopted ***TAG! You're It!*** protocol within the curricula engages all students, inclusive of ELLs and students with disabilities, in reflective higher-order thinking as they provide peers with meaningful feedback by '*Telling peers something they really liked about the work, Asking a question to better understand and Giving a suggestion that will make the work better.*' This has resulted in giving students a voice.
- Curricula provide students the use a variety of thinking maps that support deepened learning via evidentiary claims. Teachers provide classroom displays of thinking maps to help students visualize, interact and self-select the graphic organizer that suits their thinking process. As a result, lessons and unit plans provide students with opportunities to engage in higher levels of discussions and more elaborate writing as evidenced by revised lessons based on daily formative assessments of student progress.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings:

The school-wide implementation of the understanding of the beliefs guiding how students learn best are aligned to teaching practices across all classrooms that consistently provide instruction in accordance with students' multiple entry points.

Impact:

The teaching practices are informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts in a consistent lesson execution so that all students are engaged and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Students have access to a variety of texts that meet their Lexile levels. Module adjustments have been intentional to ensure that all readers, including ELLs and student with disabilities, have opportunities to experience non-fiction text with high interest topics at their level of comprehension.
- As students engage in text analysis, choice, individual decision-making, and transference or interconnectedness of skills learned are embedded in all tasks which lead to students' rationalization and conceptualization of process. For example, character analysis across all grades provides students with opportunities to connect with story characters and explain why the selection made by the specific character. These school-wide performance tasks require deep thinking and in-depth discussions where students are expected to demonstrate their understanding via real-world connections.
- The school leader has laser-like focus on the Danielson Framework for Teaching components 3a communicating With students and 3b using questioning and discussion techniques, based on the classroom visitations to ensure that teacher capacity is built via differentiated professional development opportunities so that the delivery of instruction is rigorous and of high quality with clear intentions towards positive student outcomes.
- Student work products across classrooms demonstrate an increased volume in writing. For example, the school is partnered with the Morgan Book Project where third graders engage in writing, illustrating and building authentic medieval and Renaissance-inspired manuscripts. The classroom teacher and the arts specialist work collaboratively with students modeling writing and expressions so that students can work independently on writing pieces. Tree and Bubble Map graphic organizers are used to support individual learners with ways to memorialize facts, details and ideas, thereby, facilitating the process of organization and refinement, resulting in thoughtful written products. There is an evidentiary school-wide focus on writing across all grades and content areas. During this time period, students write to the subtle sounds of classical music, thus, creating a tranquil ambience focused on creativity.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings:

All common assessments align to the curricula to create a clear picture of student progress toward mastery of goals and across grades and subjects. Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment to track progress.

Impact:

The results of common and formative assessments provide actionable feedback and are fully integrated into instruction and the instructional adjustments that meet students' needs lead to all students demonstrating increased content mastery and awareness of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- As teachers conduct their conferences with individual students, they take notes using their iPads and provide students with immediate actionable feedback on their growth and next steps. Checks for understanding occur simultaneously as teachers conduct instruction, ask questions to ascertain where students are in the learning continuum, and teachers use the results to make lesson adjustments to meet students' needs. In turn, students provide feedback to their peers as they present their work to the rest of the class. For example, as students work with buddy partners, they engage in the TAG protocol as teachers listen in for further progress monitoring. Teachers are then able to share their notes with their colleagues and the leadership in order to discuss any school-wide trends that result in instructional adjustments and professional growth.
- Teachers use common assessments to have a clear profile of every student's progress. The school-wide assessments 'mirror' or align with the instructional goals indicating how data-driven instruction provides students with multiple opportunities to 'think deeply about text and content,' 'have access to complex texts' as well as gain proficiency in writing across all content areas. For example, teachers review assessment results as a team so they know where they need to go with their instruction and, at the same time, identify any patterns in need of focus at grade level or school-wide.
- In order to dispel any misconceptions, teachers hold students accountable for the completion of post-it notes on their daily learning, thus providing teachers with viable information on what students learned and how this learning helps them in their path towards academic achievement. For example, all students are expected to engage in quick reflections on what they have learned by writing their thinking down which teachers will use as guide for next day's lessons.

Chapter pre-test item analyses take place to ascertain students' areas of strength and those in need of focus. As teachers analyze and share results, they make instructional decisions in accordance with students' goals. These decisions lead to effective shifts that support student learning and guide them towards self-assessment. In a meeting, students ably articulated where they are in their learning as well as their next steps in academic growth.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings:

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all staff members and provide training. School leader and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with families.

Impact:

The communication of high expectations leads to a culture for learning that promotes collaboration, professionalism and academic and personal achievement to support student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The strong partnership between the school and families is evident through their conversations with staff members. They appreciate the ongoing communication that ensures that the “home-school connection” is latent as they are fully informed of their children’s progress. Parents are well aware of the school-wide expectations due to their frequent informal meetings with the principal. The welcoming and rigorous learning environment provides students with an atmosphere that encourages risk-taking opportunities as they work and learn with their peers, thus develop their leadership skills, a vital entry towards college and career readiness. Each classroom has adopted professions such as engineering, doctors, police, teachers, and professional athletes that reflect students’ future aspirations.
- The weekly professional development sessions reinforce the high expectations and provide intentional support to all teachers based on the school-wide goals and the observational feedback informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teachers engage in collegial inter-visitations with ‘growth partners’ to observe each other and provide feedback for capacity-building and mutual accountability for schoolwide expectations.
- The school day begins with the recitation of the *Scholars’ Creed of Excellence*, which promotes expectations agreed upon by the community with daily reinforcement through conversations and actions. The variety of activities through partnerships and grants gives students access to a mosaic of events that drives the culture towards positive thinking and collaboration. For example, New York Cares has contributed with the beautification of the school. A partnership with the Morgan Library Book Project has third graders experiencing the “love of art and social studies.” To support parents as partners, a partnership with the New York City Department Of Education Adult Education to provide parents with English as a Second Language and General Education Development (GED) classes. Further, parents are afforded opportunities to learn leadership skills and volunteer in the school through the Learning Leaders training program. To further support the path to college and career, students are engaged in STEM through a technology grant awarded by Verizon.

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

All teachers engage in structured professional collaborations focused on student achievement and capacity-building that promotes the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams, which embed distributed leadership structures, systematically analyze classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students on whom they are focused.

Impact:

Teachers’ engagement in inquiry-based decisions lead to instructional coherence resulting in improved student achievement and mastery toward goals for groups of students. There is effective teacher leadership and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- There is an inherent belief that teachers and instructional assistants have the capability of facilitating meetings on a rotation basis. As a “community of one,” all staff members contribute to the culture of learning and are held accountable by the school leader to share the agenda and outcomes, and then in observations and feedback sessions. In addition, staff engages in a book study to align their work and practices to research-based studies. The school leader, a former Common Core Fellow, ensures that all work and instructional decisions made are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards expected outcomes.
- The intervention specialist and instructional coach ensure that all teachers’ voices are heard as they look at student work and analyze classroom data. All staff members have a small cohort of students they track their progress to ensure that interventions are in place and that student learning correlates to the teaching and core values for academic success. For example, providers convene to share their observations and assessment results so that they can collaboratively strategize on next intervention steps. These decisions are also shared with teachers and the school leader to ensure overall understanding of progress made.
- Teacher teams are involved in the school improvement process where they share their ideas with the leadership on making revisions to the curriculum and re-visiting the performance tasks to ensure that student achievement continues to increase towards mastery. Teachers are able to share their notes with colleagues and the leadership in order to discuss any school-wide trends that result in instructional improvement and professional growth. Additionally, teachers conduct their own research and prepare curricular and instructional next steps to ensure they can support their rationale to the leader with evidence for decision-making on specific students’ instructional needs. This process is modeled so that teachers continue refining their leadership skills as the school expands and the instructional responsibilities deepen.