



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Academy for Personal Leadership and Excellence**

**10X362**

**120 East 184<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bronx NY 10468**

**Principal: Angelo Ledda**

**Date of Review: November 12, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel**

## The School Context

The Academy for Personal Leadership and Excellence is a middle school with 408 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 13% Black, 83% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students and 2% other. The student body includes 34% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.0%.

## 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>Celebration</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Informed by the analysis of student data, tasks and curricula are refined to meet the needs of all learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Impact

The school leader's curricula decisions build coherence across subjects and engage students in tasks that promote thinking and prepare them for college and career.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school selected Scholastic Code X as the common core aligned curriculum for English language arts (ELA) and Connected Mathematic Project Three (CMP3) as the aligned curriculum for math. Unit plans are supplemented with modules from EngageNY. A visit to a seventh grade math class reveals general education students and Nest students engaged in collaborative math problem solving experiences, sharing their explanations and problem solutions with each other.
- Curricula across disciplines include anchor standards that derive from data informed unit plans. For example, a review of the ELA lesson plans in a sixth grade demonstrate, lessons embed five anchor standards to be addressed throughout the unit. A visit to the classroom reveals students speaking and listening reflecting the standard "engage effectively in a range of collaborations...with diverse partners building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly."
- Lesson plans reveal embedded differentiated learning opportunities in content and process with modifications that include the use of differentiated short text reading materials, use of a variety of graphic organizers for all learners, including ELLs and students with disabilities and provide evidence of fluid groupings as students move toward higher levels of mastery of the standards.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

While the school's written curricula embeds teacher high level questions, the use of high level questions to promote student thinking and produce meaningful student work varies across disciplines and classrooms.

### Impact

Across classrooms teacher questioning provides students with inconsistent student entry to lessons taught resulting in student work products that demonstrate uneven levels of high level thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- Classroom visits to classrooms reveal teacher low level questioning, elicit yes/no types of student responses. For example, in one class visited, the teacher posed the question, "Was everyone impressed by the character?" Students responded in the affirmative.
- In classrooms visited, students engaged in discussions about their work. However, conversations with students and a review of student work reveals that in some classrooms students are required to complete graphic organizers as the final work product.
- Students write argumentative essays and provide supporting evidence to their written claims. However, opportunities for students to produce work that results in the meaningful production of writing across a variety of genres is not yet a common practice.
- In an ELA class the teacher provided homogenous grouping to support struggling students and differentiated texts about a topic. However, this teaching practice of providing multiple entry points into the curricula for all students, including students performing at or approaching standard levels was not consistent across classrooms.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school uses common assessments and checks for student understanding to monitor student progress toward mastery of standards.

### Impact

The school's systems for tracking student progress provide teachers and students with actionable feedback and guides curricula and instructional adjustments that support the learning needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of the school's handbook reveals consistent and uniform grading policies are used across grades and subjects.
- Teachers consistently check for understanding of lessons taught using a wide array of systems including, annotations on "cruising" clipboards, exit slips and written reflections providing teachers with immediate data about student understanding to guide adjustments to student groupings. For example, in an English as a second language class, the teacher conferred with students and logged the names of students that should move to a different group for future group work.
- Teachers use results from student baseline assessments in reading and the item analysis on New York State ELA assessments to redesign lessons that focus on anchor standards that demonstrate challenges to students.
- Students use rubrics to assess the quality of their work and gain understanding of the next steps that elevate work to standard levels. For example, in an eighth grade ELA class, students used rubric criteria and included additional details in written arguments to support their claims.

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

The school communicates high expectations to staff through the use of Danielson's Framework competencies and to families and students through a variety of systems and venues.

### **Impact**

The school's system of communicating high expectations strengthens the partnerships amongst all stakeholders and supports student learning that prepares them for college and career.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Frequent classroom observations, actionable feedback and weekly professional learning sessions ensure staff is held accountable for meeting expectations that elevate their teaching practice.
- Staff and parent/student handbook, monthly grade assemblies, Positive Behavior Interventions Systems (PBIS) and daily student and staff pledges highlight the school's expectations.
- Monthly parent workshops around parent selected topics including sessions on the student high school selection process, demands of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), resume writing, job searching techniques and school guidance advisement sessions keep parents abreast of strategies to use to support student achievement.
- The school's use of Skedula serves as an ongoing messaging system for parents and students about student academic and personal growth.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and teacher teams engage in regularly scheduled professional collaborations. Teachers participate in making decisions about lessons, curricula and instructional practices.

### Impact

Teacher teams participate in structured collaborations and share decisions that promote student learning outcomes and build teacher capacity.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams participate in book studies that further support the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Teachers engage in text conversations about their craft around suggested ideas from the *text Bringing the Common Core to Life* by Eric Jensen and Leann Nickelsen and further align their instructional practices to the Common Core Learning Standards shifts.
- Teacher teams meet regularly with consultant, Leann Nickelsen to support them in elevating the level of their practice in ELA. A review of the school's professional development plan reveals a recent focus on building differentiated learning experiences for all students.
- The school's teacher facilitated School Implementation Team (SIT) meets weekly to review individual education plans, look at student progress reports and make recommendations to the school leaders and classroom teachers that further support student personal progress. Teachers expressed that they make suggestions for students to use "fidgets" and "break areas" when they may be feeling particularly anxious.
- Teacher facilitated grade level meetings provide the venue for teachers to exchange best instructional practices that support student achievement. For example, eighth grade teachers articulated that they share ideas about embedding the writing process into lessons to improve the quality of student writing.