



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Young Leaders Elementary School

Elementary School X369

**468 East 140th Street
Bronx
NY 10454**

Principal: Jaleelah Cooke

Date of review: January 23, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

The School Context

Young Leaders is an elementary school with 273 students from pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school population comprises 14% Black, 85% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 47% English language learners and 18% 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 91.0%.

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	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		
<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

Structured professional collaborations provide the majority of teachers with opportunities to strengthen their instructional practices as they engage in inquiry and analysis of student work through the support of their coaches.

Impact

Horizontal and vertical meetings as well as planning sessions amongst teachers result in improved practices and progress in instructional goals as they make decisions around student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The planning sessions across grades provide teachers with opportunities to discuss patterns in student work as they engage in deep analysis using the inquiry process to ascertain viable next steps that will contribute to academic improvement. Teachers, in collaboration with their coaches and following an agreed-upon protocol, share their noticings and wonderings on how to help students step up their writing and critical thinking skills. This collective sharing leads to stronger professional ties where teachers arrange to visit each other and provide feedback. For example, teachers are taking risks and ‘thinking out-of-the-box’ ways to have students lead lessons and provide feedback to their peers. This creative thinking has motivated other teachers to implement in their classrooms and share results.
- Teachers hold each other accountable by ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of colleagues at sessions rotate so that agendas and minutes are expedited in a timely manner online. Common planning sessions are teacher-driven, facilitated by coaches, thus giving teachers the sense of ownership as they engage in in-depth conversations on how their tracking of students leads to evidentiary progress. Conversations amongst teachers are based on research and professional books they have read for the enhancement of their practices.
- There are structures in place to engage teachers in leadership capacity-building. Coaching cycles provide teachers with their participation in study groups focused on the school-wide overarching goals that result in action research. Individualized support from the coaches has contributed to teacher growth and maturation in their instructional skills. Teachers appreciate this support in place this year for the positive impact on their self-confidence and their connections with their colleagues.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The instructional focus “*Let’s Talk about Our Thinking*” requires a variety of pedagogical methodologies informed by the shifts and aligned to the Common Core Standards in order to address the needs of all learners by ensuring access to rigorous tasks where they demonstrate their thinking via ‘scaffolded’ techniques or strategies.

Impact

As a result of the scaffolded performance tasks and school-wide focus on questioning and discussion, some students demonstrate cognitive engagement and higher order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Students’ participation in the *Community Circle* is an opportunity to develop conversational skills so that they can elaborate, build on each other’s ideas or engage in debate. This conversation requires students to be specific and explicit in their thinking. The use of graphic organizers to support students’ thinking and sense of organization is an evidentiary attempt to scaffold all students’ learning through vocabulary development and intense questioning techniques. However, there is still a lack of coherence in the delivery of rigorous instruction leading to uneven cognitive engagement of students from classroom to classroom.
- There are pockets of high-leveled instructional practices that challenge students to think, substantiate their claims and problem solve. In math, students work in small groups using the self-check problem solving protocol, which assists students with figuring out what the word problem is calling for and how to solve it. As students read and write about characters and issues presented in their readings, they turn and talk with partners to share their wonderings and/or claims. Some classes have students facilitating this process on their own as teachers listen in and take notes to provide students with feedback for continuous improvement. For example, in a co-teaching classroom structure, teachers have partnered with students by modeling how to teach their peers and develop their leadership skills, thus vesting in student talk, independent thinking and intellectual risk-taking.
- The low teacher-to-student ratio provides students, especially English language learners and students with disabilities, with opportunities to work at their pace and develop a conceptual understanding of the tasks at hand. For example, specialty teachers and service providers ‘push in’ to classes, thus ensuring that students have access to the Common Core Standards-aligned lessons with the appropriate scaffolds that contribute to better understanding and productive work.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school uses common assessments to acquire more information on students' learning needs. As teachers track student progress, only a few adjust curricula and instruction for academic improvement.

Impact

The results of rubrics, conferral notes and other assessments provide teachers with crucial information on student performance and individual needs. This leads to lesson adjustments and individual feedback sessions with students for instructional growth.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers look at data and students' reading levels to make decisions on specific scaffolds that will build stamina and increase students' comprehension skills for more independent reading. The collaborative assessment sessions amongst few teachers inform their practices by sharing and comparing results vis-à-vis student work products in order to identify trends that lead to future collaborations with an inquiry approach.
- The use of additional formative assessments as well as end-of-unit assessments provides teachers with information they share with their colleagues in order to reflect on the impact of their practices and discuss strategies on how to support students in the achievement of their immediate goals for overall improvement. Although teachers articulate that some students have achieved benchmark goals by providing evidence in their reflections and work products, this is still at the developing stage due to the uneven levels of student achievement.
- The overall assessment results provide the school leaders and teachers with an instructional picture of where the school is and areas in need of immediate focus. The instructional cabinet and teacher leaders meet to dissect the results further into protocols and small strategy groups to address the identified needs. However, this process is still in the developing stages as not all teachers are consistently making the needed adjustments in the delivery of instruction in order to meet the differentiated needs of students at their multiple entry points.

Findings

Curriculum and units of study are aligned to the Common Core Standards and informed by the instructional shifts in order to provide access to all learners. The performance tasks engage students in rigorous habits and higher-order opportunities to develop cognitive skills.

Impact

Teachers plan Common Core-aligned lessons that result in the development of higher order student work and the promotion of college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers have redesigned the instructional blocks to ensure more alignment to the CCLS and instructional shifts expectations. These clear expectations have led to clarity around routines and students' responsibilities as they work in small groups. In addition, as teachers share the outcomes of the student work and their participation in group discussions, teacher teams make adjustments to refine instruction.
- The comprehensive reading interventions in place this year such as Leveled Literacy Intervention, Foundations, Reading Rescue, Just Words and Wilson provide students with an array of direct instructional services to elevate struggling students' literacy and cognitive levels in order to ensure that they receive the deserved access to Common Core-aligned learning.
- The promotion of college and career readiness is evident in the community conversations teachers hold with their students on a daily basis. Students and parents are well aware that the instruction has become more challenging as they agree of their struggles with the work given thus far. Subsequently, they know that this difficult learning will help them grow to the next level.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Consistent communication of high expectations fosters accountability and strong ties with staff, students and families. This message resonates in community conversations leading to the understanding that students are being prepared for the future.

Impact

School leaders in unison with teachers communicate and promote high expectations to develop students as thinkers with needed skills to thrive and persevere.

Supporting Evidence

- The school-wide concentration on speaking and discussion helps students grow as speakers and listeners. These same skills are shared with parents so they are aware of these expectations for continuous practice at home. Due to the strong partnership between the school and home, parents feel part of the educational process with a willingness to continue learning about the Common Core Learning Standards and how these impact on their children's learning for future achievement.
- Teacher-driven 'Learning Walks' and inter-visitations to lab sites are accountability structures in place to ensure that all teachers learn from each other as they use the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a basis for this learning process and capacity-building. The majority of teachers have taken the ownership of sharing insights on these visitations and the impact on their own practice as school leaders continue to perform classroom observations.
- As all teachers continue to look at student work alongside their students, they discuss areas of celebration as well as next steps giving students opportunities to decipher if they have reached their goals with supporting evidence. Once achieved, students are expected to identify their new goals they deem will help them prepare for the next level. Teachers then provide students with additional feedback to facilitate the discussion and help refine final decision-making. For example, in a fifth grade team teaching and collaborative planning has led to students learning what it takes to plan a lesson resulting in relevant learning. Teachers have guided their students to plan and execute mini lessons to their peers. Students have learned how to organize their own learning plans as they listen to their peers' feedback and confer with their teachers. This reciprocal process has emanated from teachers and students looking at their work collaboratively. Most importantly, it has created a sense of trust and responsibility towards learning with expected outcomes.