



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

**Antonia Pantoja Preparatory Academy:
A College Board School**

Middle-High School X376

**1980 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10473**

Principal: Nalini Singh

**Date of review: May 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Socorro Diaz**

The School Context

Antonia Pantoja Preparatory Academy: A College Board School is a middle-high school with 466 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 24% Black, 71% Hispanic, 0% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 31% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 86.5%.

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	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	Celebration	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	Focus	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to the staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching during professional development and through other forms of communication. Leadership and staff successfully communicate with families these expectations to support student progress.

Impact

Collaboration between all community stakeholders fosters ongoing communication of high expectations to staff and families resulting in a clear path which increases student achievement and college and career readiness

Supporting Evidence

- The Danielson Framework for Teaching (DFT) is the major focus for weekly professional development. For example, the professional development calendar indicates sessions devoted to the instructional focus of engagement through questioning and discussion as well as establishing clear teaching points that are aligned to the instructional focus. A review of lesson plans reveals that teaching points are aligned to the instructional focus and include opportunities for purposeful discussion by all learners.
- Actionable feedback provided to teachers is linked to ongoing training that is provided as a way to hold teachers accountable. A review of lesson observation recommendations reveals consistent reference to domain 3 of the DFT, specifically 3c “Engaging Student in Learning”. One recommendation stated “To increase students’ intellectual engagement with the material, embed the practice problems in real world examples and give students the opportunities to discuss them.”
- Parents spoke enthusiastically about the frequent communication and regular reports they receive on their children’s progress with tips on how to help their children at home. One parent said “The teachers let us know how our children are doing. When my son was a little behind, they told me how to help.” Another parent said, “There was good communication. It’s a family. We know who to talk to and it gets resolved.” In addition, parents expressed that there were many opportunities to speak to the principal sharing feedback and making recommendations.

Area of Focus

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

The majority of teachers engage in inquiry based professional collaborations. However, the practice of analyzing assessment data and student work to improve teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students is not yet systemized. Distributed leadership structures are in the beginning stages.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations are beginning to result in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students. The initial structures for distributed leadership are beginning to result in teachers having a voice in some school wide decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Although teacher teams incorporate the practice of examining student work, norming criteria for common assessments guiding the work of teachers in adjusting tasks and determining progress toward goals it is in the initial stage. For example, during an observed teacher team meeting, the math inquiry team was in the process of deciding which common rubric language to adopt in order to norm grading practices.
- Teacher teams meet regularly to examine their own work as well as student work to adjust teaching practices. Professional development on data driven instruction is provided. Teachers are beginning to use data to refine instruction and make adjustments to their curriculum. During an inquiry team meeting focusing on mathematics skills the team analyzed a students' work and discussed the student's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the learning target. This was then used to plan next steps and reteach if necessary.
- There are some opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles to affect student learning. For example, in reviewing EngageNY Units for English, teachers made decisions to spotlight certain skills within a chapter to support students' understanding and development of skills. To that end, in a unit that dealt with connotation and denotation regarding author's purpose, they focused on connotation. Other leadership capacity-building structures are developing to involve more teachers in key decisions regarding student achievement across the school. For example, teachers planned and executed a successful Career Day.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks do not as yet offer a coherent continuum of rigorous habits and higher order skills for all learners including English language learners and students with disabilities.. Planning and refining curricula and performance tasks using student work and assessment data varies across grades and subjects.

Impact

Although there is some modification of curricula to align student needs, supports are not consistently tailored to meet the needs of specific student subgroups. Therefore, not all students are consistently challenged with high level tasks pushing their thinking, and promoting college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school employs Expeditionary Learning for the middle grades and EngageNY Units of Study for the high school grades. Math teachers use CMP3 and EngageNY instructional materials across all grades. Teachers have made some adjustments of these curricula to best meet the needs of their students. For example, a grade 6 Expeditionary Learning unit was amplified to include cause/effect relationships and added key questions to allow students to look deeper into the text and relate the text to another they had read. However, the practice of informing curricular decisions for all learners through the in-depth analysis of data and student work is not yet a systematic practice.
- Although curriculum documents are structured to reflect Common Core Standards, academic tasks do not always lead to higher order thinking. For example, in a grade 10 algebra class students were asked to determine and compare the roots of a quadratic equation through the factoring method. There were few opportunities for students to analyze, synthesize and engage in meaningful discussion.
- While some planning reflects grouping students based on previous administered assessments, a review of lesson plans revealed that targeted supports for students who struggle are not always specific nor are they consistently seen across grades and subject areas. For example, lesson plans contained few scaffolds for English language learners or students with disabilities to gain access to the curricula and engage in rigorous, challenging academic tasks. In one lesson plan, the differentiation was listed as a “pre-made KWL chart for ELLs and special education students”. In another lesson the teacher listed differentiation as “pair ELL students and encourage them to narrate their experiences and understandings”.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points to cognitively engage all students. Work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of thinking and participation.

Impact

Missed opportunities to engage all learners in consistently challenging tasks and higher order thinking, hinders students from exhibiting their work at high levels.

Supporting Evidence

- While in most classes students were seated in groups, the lack of purposeful grouping results in uneven leveled support. For example, in a self-contained special education class students were seated in trios and worked on different graphic organizers, yet, the organizers required the students to exhibit the same skills of comparing and contrasting.
- Questioning strategies to promote higher levels of student thinking and discussions were inconsistent across classrooms. Some teachers posed questions that were mainly low level, and did not promote strategic or extended thinking. For example, in a multi grade self-contained class, students worked on solving a math problem about bonus points and number of rides at an amusement park. While in a seventh grade English language arts class students were asked to discuss the meaning of the word “synthesize”.
- Although teaching points that conveyed standards-aligned instructional goals for the lesson were observed, student discussion was limited and consisted largely of individual students raising their hands to give short responses. For example, in a grade 6 class when a student offered an answer, the teacher’s response was “Good. Write that.” thus limiting the opportunity for extended thinking.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is in the process of developing rubrics and grading policies to align with the school's curricula. The use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals is at its initial stages.

Impact

Rubrics and grading policies are not yet fully aligned with the school's curricula providing limited targeted feedback to students. Results of common assessments are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a variety of checklists and rubrics in their classrooms, however they are not consistent across grades and subjects. Teachers are at the initial stages of looking at student work across grades measured against a standards-based rubric as a way to norm scoring criteria and employ a tool to measure progress. Across classrooms visited the use of rubrics was loosely aligned to curricula and most rubrics were generic.
- Although teachers provide suggestions for student improvement, feedback inconsistently delivers next steps based on specific, leveled rubric criteria in order to indicate how students can move to the next level. An example of teacher feedback read, "Try planning your time better. Your essay was well written until the end. Always end with a strong sentence since it is the last thing your reader will remember." Yet others revealed broader comments such as, "Well done!"
- Teachers have begun to set up systems to look at student work to inform adjustments to instruction. For example, after analyzing a piece of argumentative writing, grade 8 English teachers discussed ways to modify instruction which included unpacking the task to make the requirements of the task clear, spending more time on the use of transition words and citing evidence connected to the main idea. They have also devised a sheet to capture and monitor student progress. One teacher shared a comment regarding the importance of looking at student work to change instruction. However, a formal, systematic way to track student progress and the impact of teacher work is still evolving.