



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**School for Environmental Citizenship**

**Elementary School X386**

**125 East 181<sup>st</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10453**

**Principal: Lynnann Fox**

**Date of review: March 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone**

## The School Context

P.S. 386 School for Environmental Citizenship is an elementary school with 511 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 20% Black, 78% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 31% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.0%.

## 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>Additional Findings</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>Celebration</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

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

School leaders, using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, consistently communicate high expectations to the staff. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations with families apprised of student progress leading to college and career readiness.

### Impact

The structures that are in place support the school leaders' high expectations and accountability amongst staff, students and their families. School leaders and staff expectations provide a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal publishes a Weekly Happenings, which in addition to previewing the week's events, consistently states the school-wide instructional focus along with expectations of what teachers and administrators will do to address the focus. "Teachers will plan for quality tasks that allow productive struggle and use Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's Depth of Knowledge . . . Administrators will provide quality professional development to support teachers in planning for higher quality questioning and discussion techniques and provide timely feedback . . ."
- To support the instructional focus on high quality classroom discussions that allow students to deepen and extend their thinking and to communication expectations , the administrators' school-wide professional development calendar includes such sessions as Lifting the Level of Questioning, Discussion, and Cognitive Demand to Help Students Engage in Productive Struggle Parts 1 and 2; Developing Rich Opinion Makers, Speakers, and Writers Through Writing Workshop, Book Talk and Debate; Our Instructional Focus as it Relates to ELLs and Promoting Student Discourse in Math.
- A review of lesson observations reveals that suggestions by school leaders to teachers serve to emphasize the expectations of the school-wide instructional focus. One comment reads, "Include Essential Question(s) and DOK, Bloom's higher order thinking questions to engage students in challenging thinking and problem solving." Another comment reads, "...set time allotments to provide opportunities for students to pose and answer questions that relate to Big Ideas from the topic."
- Administration and staff communicate expectations to families through a variety of venues. Newsletters and informational flyers inform parents of curricular topics for the month and provide practice ideas at home. For example, the first grade newsletter includes a focus on characters for reading, opinion writing, addition and subtraction strategies, solids and liquids, and communities now and long ago. Practice ideas at home include "Make flash cards for sight words each week and practice with your child each night."
- During a parent meeting, parents spoke about how teachers keep them informed about their children's progress through conferences, calls to the home, progress reports, and allowing parents to sit in the child's classroom. One parent said, "When they're done with me, I become a teacher at home."

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the lesson and student discussion reflected uneven levels of student understanding.

### Impact

Across classrooms, there were some missed opportunities to engage all learners in challenging tasks and higher order thinking, thus hindering students from participating and exhibiting their work at high levels.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, some teaching strategies included questioning and scaffolds that provided multiple entry points for all students such as the use of Smartboards, manipulatives, graphic organizers, charts, visuals, and differentiated instruction. In some classes, these entry points helped students to engage in higher-order thinking. In a fourth grade math class that included English language learners, the teacher asked, “How can we take what we already know to figure out the answer?” to elicit ideas from the students. When two different ideas were offered, the teacher asked students which idea they agreed with and to provide an explanation. To probe further, the teacher then asked students to take out their notebooks saying, “You have different ideas. What’s the best way to solve the problem?” In this way, students provided both verbal and written explanations and extended their thinking by listening to other students. However, in other classes, strategies to promote higher-order thinking emphasized procedure over conceptual understanding. In a first grade class, students were asked to move objects—rice, lima beans, mung beans, pinto beans and cornmeal—through a funnel and make observations. When asked, several students could not explain why they were doing the activity.
- The school’s instructional focus is student discussion. In some classes, we saw students using discussion stems, or engaging in extended talk in response to a question or prompt. For example, in a grades3/4/5 bridge class, students in small groups discussed the main character’s problem, and why the story setting was important. However, in other classes, discussion to ensure that every child’s voice was heard was limited to short turn and talk activities that did not require students to think through a higher order question to examine and question a variety of possible answers.
- Most questioning was teacher to student and while in some classes students were asked to respond to questions at a higher Depth of Knowledge (DoK) level, in others, questions were at a lower DoK level. In a fourth grade class, students responded to the question, “What is the theme?” by writing an answer that appeared on their handout. In a third grade math class the teacher asked, “What is the first step?” A student answered, “Multiplication.” The teacher asked, “Who agrees?” Although across classes, students responded when asked to explain, prompts that challenged students to engage in high levels of thinking and participation were inconsistently demonstrated.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts and reflect higher order skills in a coherent way across grades and subject areas.

### Impact

School leaders and staff curricular decisions are purposeful, respond to students' needs, ensure higher order tasks, and allow students to demonstrate their thinking leading to college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- A curriculum and student learning team analyzed curricular alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and made curricular decisions. Teachers College Reading program and elements of the New York City Writing Project are used for literacy instruction. When they noticed that the fifth grade comparative literature essay required additional texts, those were purchased to amplify the unit. In math, grade teams create units of study using the Go Math and EngageNY curricula as resources with the guidance of a math consultant to ensure curricular alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards. There are also vertical planning teams to ensure coherence of curricula across grades. For example, in kindergarten, students focus on convincing people by providing reasons and consequences. In first grade, students write reviews to persuade others, in second grade, they are adding quotes to support opinions. In addition, iReady supplements literacy and math for targeted students based on needs revealed by a diagnostic.
- A review of lesson plans reveals that teachers incorporate higher order thinking skills into lesson plans. The majority of lesson plans include Depth of Knowledge (DoK) questions across levels. For example, in a first grade lesson on making comparisons in writing, a summary question reads, "How do comparisons make your review more convincing?" \
- In math, there is weekly planning of "productive struggle" tasks designed to have students work in teams to solve cognitively challenging, multi-step, open-ended math problems. For example, a math lesson plan for a self-contained grades3/4/5 bridge class poses the problem, "84 children in four grades are arranged into teams with the same number on each team. How many teams are there and how many children might be on each team?" After clarifying key words, students are asked to engage in group work to solve the problem.

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

Teachers use common assessments, rubrics aligned to curricula, checks for understanding, and student self- and peer-assessment strategies to monitor progress and provide students with actionable feedback.

### Impact

The school's use of common assessments, curriculum-aligned rubrics, and feedback structures allows teachers to determine student progress and adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use common assessments and common rubrics on a grade to provide feedback to students in the form of rubric-aligned comments and actionable next steps. For example, regarding a student's math performance task, a fifth grade teacher wrote, "You solved the problem correctly and addressed most aspects of the task. However, you did not show all your mathematical thinking. You lack the details needed to receive more than a 2." A third grade teacher wrote, ". . . you are reading closely and noticing details. Because you notice such great details, see if you can write a half page for each point."
- Students are asked to incorporate formative assessment feedback into final pieces. For example, a fourth grade student's first draft of a piece of narrative writing included feedback from the teacher on where to show the setting, where to include dialogue and feelings, and where to include sensory and figurative language. Comments on the rewritten piece noted the student's improvements and an area for continued work. The teacher wrote, "Excellent use of vocabulary and showing what you did using dialogue and action . . . We need to work on creating paragraphs for dialogue."
- Across classrooms visited, teachers employed checks for understanding, which included questioning and circulating as a way to monitor student learning and effect adjustments. In a fifth grade class students were asked to talk to their group members about how an author's description of the middle passage made an impact on the reader. She noticed that a group was discussing the facts they had read in the article. "Let me redirect you," she said. "How does the author make you feel? How does he influence you?"
- Students engage in peer- and self- assessment. A review of written reflections showed that students were able to assess their own work and give feedback to their peers. A third grade student's written reflection on an informational writing piece stated, "I think I need to improve on elaboration . . ." Self-assessment prompts are posted on students' tables that include, "4 – I understand and could teach", 3 – I understand, 2 – I think I get it." Students also give feedback to each other. A fifth grade student wrote to her peer regarding a writing piece on immigration, "I like how you elaborated (but) in the last paragraph you did not spark an idea." In a student meeting, students spoke about how they provide feedback to each other. One student said, "I wrote, '(you) had a good thesis statement but didn't grow your ideas and there's no concluding statement.'" Another student said, "I like getting the feedback so I can get higher grades and learn from the experience."

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

Teacher teams engage in professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

**Impact**

The work of teacher teams has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers and has resulted in improvements to pedagogical practices and a stronger voice in key decisions affecting student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams are structured to look at student work and data and then make adjustments to strengthen teacher capacity and improve student achievement. During a teacher team meeting, fourth grade teachers spoke about examining an assessment question on point of view on which students had not performed well. Together they planned to revise their lessons for the following week to infuse questions to address students’ understanding and explanation of point of view. Similarly, the last math assessment revealed that students struggled in simplifying fractions. They revised their “Do Now’s” to revisit and practice simplifying fractions and then retest the students to determine the level of progress.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about the practice of collaboratively solving a math problem they intend to introduce to their classes in order to anticipate how children might respond. There is an emphasis now on student engagement in productive struggle to think through a task such as a math problem, or a social studies issue presented in a way as to elicit debate. One teacher said, “It made a huge difference.”
- Teachers of the Response to Intervention (RTI) team spoke about making decisions regarding the types of interventions they use to address students’ needs. When one teacher was trained in Great Leaps, she brought it back where it was adopted by the RTI team and has been in use across the school. Grade team leaders and cluster leader establish roles and norms for their collaborative team meetings to align practices to the instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards.