



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Sheridan Academy for Young Leaders**

**Elementary School X457**

**1116 Sheridan Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Lisette Febus**

**Date of review: March 23, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Luz T. Cortazzo**

## The School Context

Sheridan Academy for Young Leaders is an elementary school with 618 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 31% Black, 66% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 26% English language learners and 21% 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 90.2%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

The school has established a culture for learning by consistently communicating high expectations to the entire school community including teachers, students and parents through timely on-going communication, and delivery of effective feedback and guidance supports. School leaders consistently provide training to support the elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

### Impact

Structures that support high expectations assure a culture of mutual accountability among staff members. As a result of teacher teams' and staff members critical interventions and on-going provision of feedback and advisements, students have ownership of their own educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students benefit and persevere from strong partnerships with teachers, school leaders and all members of the school community who consider academic success and performance of students their central mission.
- The school has established social-emotional supports for students by establishing the Character Pledge program throughout the school. Students are developing leadership qualities through the 7 Habits Education and Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS). Both programs support and teach students techniques to take ownership of their own learning, model good study habits to complete project-based assignments and learn to resolve conflict to better manage their social-emotional needs.
- Administrators and teachers reflect on unit plans regularly, these reviews serve to hold teachers accountable for meeting school expectations. On-going professional development, book clubs and conferences reinforce expectations and create mutual accountability for school priorities. Consistent classroom environments include anchor charts with clear expectations, content and skill based goals for students, displays of student work and wonderings, posted essential questions and "I can" learning targets so that students are aware of their own learning process.
- Parents unanimously agree that there is easy access to staff via newsletters, email or phone and that this is an invaluable resource in keeping abreast of how their children are doing academically and socially. Parents stated that the teachers continually call them to inform them of positive gains as well as areas of improvement for their children.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

There is a universal philosophy throughout the school based on how students learn best that is aligned to the Danielson Framework so that the needs of students are met.

### Impact

While school wide practices, including questioning techniques and scaffolds can be seen across grades, in some classes, there were uneven levels of all learners being able to engage in discussion and demonstrate meaningful work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a small fifth grade group of English language learners, students were eagerly completing a graphic organizer while integrating information from several texts to answer the question, "How do satellites help us?" The teacher unpacked the academic vocabulary, modeled how to restate the question, answer the question, and include two details using evidence from the texts. Students engaged in visual prompts, partner work, turn and talk, and picture prompts.
- In an integrated co-teaching (ICT) class, students listened to another student read the teaching point, "I can identify how each scene of a play moves the plot forward", while the teacher provided the students with a quick check about parts of a play to check for understanding. After explaining how plays are broken into scenes, and asking students to relate to the Cinderella play they had seen, students were informed that they will be acting out their parts in front of the class and they needed to use their emotions and best acting skills when playing a part in a play. Students were given a text to read and then turn and talk to discuss several questions. Differentiation included turn and talk, the use of graphic organizers, acting out a scene, and the use of sentence starters for lower students.
- In a first grade class, students took a picture walk and gathered information about community workers. The teacher explained how they will gather information about mail carriers without reading the words, just looking at the pictures. The teacher modeled a think aloud using the picture on the cover, and wrote facts on a post it. The teacher displayed another picture and the students were asked to turn and talk to share the information they got from the picture, then she recorded the information on chart paper. Students were then placed in groups and given different pictures to gather information from. Students engaged in partner work, picture prompts, and turn and talk.
- In a fifth grade ICT classroom, students were grouped according to their IEP goals, or independent reading skills while combining information from two or more texts about the same topic to answer a question. Students were able to explain what resources would help them to complete the assigned task.

## Additional Findings

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

The school's choice of curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula and academic tasks are revised using student work and data to support diverse student needs.

### Impact

The schools curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Across subjects teachers make intentional decisions to emphasize key standards and target students' areas of weaknesses and promote college and career readiness

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty engaged in collaboratively inquiry to research different ways to support the English language arts curriculum, findings indicated that the team needed to better align the Ready Gen units to make the information being taught more relevant to students' needs. They engaged in a curriculum mapping process with resources from Learner Centered Initiatives (LCI) to look at the standards that were being addressed in the Ready Gen units and those that were missing in their instruction. Using the LCI gap analysis tool, they discovered that while the Ready Gen units were aligned to the Common Core, the alignment was not consistently strong. As a result, teachers developed stronger units containing formative assessments, alignment between the articulation of specific tasks and identified standards to ensure that every student has an opportunity to succeed.
- The entire school focuses on the Common Core instructional shift of writing from sources to support students in making claims that are supported with textual evidence. For example, in a fifth grade class students examine and convey complex ideas and concepts in writing assignments that require them to integrate information from several sources and data culled from two or more texts, tables, and graphs.
- The school uses the Critical Friends protocol for analyzing student work to identify and examine low inference observations to inform revision of curricula and tasks. Teachers discuss student thinking, standards that students are required to know, and the evident gaps that need to be addressed. This information is then used to refine curricula and create academic tasks that offer differentiated access so that the English language learners and students with disabilities are cognitively engaged in their learning.
- The school uses a uniform school-wide template to create unit plans that include the New York State content standards and the Common Core Learning Standards, organizing center, essential questions, Performance Based assessment, literacy and differentiation strategies, vocabulary, content knowledge, rubrics and assessments activities.

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

Across classrooms teachers use common assessments, student work and checks for understanding to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas and adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level.

### **Impact**

Teachers use on-going checks for understanding and deliver actionable feedback thereby making effective adjustments to curricula and instruction and meet all students' learning needs.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school utilizes common assessments in all content areas including Performance Based Assessments, Diagnostics Reading Assessments, ELA simulation tests, Ready New York Common Core Learning Standards ELA assessment that monitor students' progress towards mastery of skills and Go Math end of unit tests which provide authentic information on student performance and progress. Teachers use these assessment results to make informed decisions in adjusting curricula and instruction and devise plans for students not making progress.
- Across grades and content areas, rubrics are aligned to the school's grading policy and upper grade students state that their teacher's feedback helps them know their strengths and that they are able to plan for next steps that have led to improvements in their learning process.
- Students explained that every project and assignment has a rubric that is comprehensive, and easy to follow. As a result, students state that it is "easier for them to get good grades because they know exactly how to apply the rules for writing, reading or math and meet expectations."

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

Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams and consistently analyze assessment data and student work so that plans are adjusted to meet students' needs.

**Impact**

A focus on shared responsibilities has built leadership capacity and has resulted in strong reflection of instructional practices to improve student achievement and student progress in participation and discussion.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher leaders who represent each grade, meet weekly and voluntarily with grade teams to review the school's instructional focus and monitor grade goals in alignment with teacher practice.
- Teachers shared that they are able to make decisions about curriculum and unit plan changes based on data reviews and that their decisions are supported by the administration. For example, through collaborative inquiry the team researched different ways to support the Math curriculum. Findings indicated that the team needed to better align the curriculum to make the information being taught more relevant to students. As a result of the team's work there has been a total average growth for all five strands combined of 16%. Similarly, K-3 students reading above grade level went from 37% in the beginning of the year to 53% in February. This reflects a total gain of 16% of K-3 students reading at or above grade level.
- A review of last year's NYC School Survey indicates that 93% of the staff strongly agrees that working together in teams improve their instructional practice.