



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

P469X - The Bronx School for Continuous Learners

Elementary School X469

**3177 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Janine Tubiolo

**Date of review: April 16-17, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Donna Dimino**

The School Context

The Bronx School for Continuous Learners is an elementary school with 122 students from grade kindergarten through grade 2. The school population comprises 39% Black, 52% Hispanic, 5% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 80% of the students enrolled and girls account for 20%. This is the school's first year of operation.

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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Proficient
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	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders communicate a clear vision for student success and provide training to support a high bar for meeting expectations and for partnering with families.

Impact

The communication of a cohesive set of high expectations has quickly fostered a culture of collaboration and mutual accountability among leaders, staff, parents and students that translates to short and long term success for every student.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's vision is "Leading and Educating by Knowing, Doing and Being". Building a positive culture of celebration by finding at least one success "each day, in some way" as well as reflecting on "wonderings and happenings" leads to "daily huddles" that take place at each site at the end of the day. Site coordinators communicate daily huddle notes to the school principal, placing value in what is shared each day. The school principal then celebrates these successes, provides clarification to inquiries or even creates opportunities for collaboration and professional learning projects based on input/feedback. Weekly team e-mails set a focus and for the upcoming week and include guidance documents reflective of the particular professional learning target for the week. Teachers value the culture of learning school leaders have nurtured. As one teacher stated, "The Principal creates an environment that allows you to be who you are yet be professional but on your 'A' game. She challenges me as a professional because the expectation is so high, and yet she's not a boss I can't go to. We're a team."
- School staff expressed that it is "intrinsic" to the school's focus to promote a culture that embraces communication and mutual responsibility with families for their students' progress and, thus, they constantly monitor the needs of its community to find new ways to support families, foster inclusion, and accelerate student success. They quickly recognized a need for dual language education to support their large number of native Spanish speaking students and identified a team of bilingual educators at the school who wrote a successful proposal establishing a brand new dual language program for the coming school year.
- School leaders and staff proactively partner with families to ensure on-going success in early learning readiness that can lead to long term mainstreaming. Parents say that they value that teachers communicate with them using a daily communication notebook and through weekly updates that keep them apprised of what their child is learning and progress made toward both academic and behavioral goals. Each teacher team, organized by class ratio, work together to plan a differentiated newsletter to let families know what's going on in each subject. Out of classroom teachers generate a newsletter as well. Additionally, every teacher has a website for parents to get class-specific curricula information. Parents express appreciation that the school supports them "to reinforce what the kids are learning" at home in terms of academic and behavioral skills, noting that, "It's a learning process for us as well."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school has a coherent structure of common assessments that are aligned to curricula and used to track students' progress toward goals. Teachers consistently check for understanding to make purposeful adjustments during instruction and in instructional planning.

Impact

School leaders and teachers have an ongoing understanding of the progress of all learners that informs the instructional practices at the team and classroom levels. However, limitations of rubrics in current use, limits teacher and student awareness of specific academic next steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The school makes adjustments to curriculum plans, writes individualized goals, and tracks student progress toward short and long term targets using a school-wide comprehensive assessment tool Assessment of Basic Language Learning Skills(ABLLS-R). Teachers can speak to how benchmarking data from this assessment, in addition to a set of uniform programmatic and behavioral assessments, are analyzed for trends at the team and classroom levels to inform fluid student groupings and make adjustments to planning practices and/or instructional delivery. For example, based on input from teachers' analysis, the school plans on moving to a streaming model to support students based on more granular homogeneous needs. At the school level, data analysis has yielded the same language-based need across all sites regarding "intra-verbals", the ability to respond to stimulus words without any physical objects or support. This has become a priority learning target for all lesson planning for whole class, small group, and skill-based center learning structures.
- Staff monitoring of students' cognitive engagement is visibly active on the part of stakeholders including paraprofessionals. In all classrooms visited, teaching teams were observed working with small groups with adapted materials, circulating to guide and intervene as needed, or providing intervention one-to-one with students. Checks for understanding and student self-assessment of daily learning targets are incorporated into instructional periods. Students were seen self-assessing in an age-appropriate way by determining if the learning was "too easy, too hard, or just right."
- Teachers work collaboratively to adjust programmatic assessments to meet the needs of students along a range of cognitive ability levels. Rubrics have been created to assess student work products and a universal rubric exists across the organization, however, it relies heavily on the assessment of personal behaviors. While teachers are working to refine these rubrics to delineate specific academic skills, current rubrics in use do not provide students with specific feedback that targets academic skills and sub-skills across subject areas.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has purposefully adopted curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards integrating the shifts as well as academic and personal behaviors. Staff revise tasks using a range of student information and work to enhance curricula to provide rigorous learning experiences that meet the needs of students of all cognitive ability levels.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build grade and subject coherence across the organization. Students, including those at the high and low end of intellectual capacity, have access to rigorous learning and thinking in preparation for long-term success.

Supporting Evidence

- P469X has a cohesive focus on “learning readiness” as an overarching instructional focus for their school community. Across classrooms and across sites children of all ability levels are engaged in work that provides them with access to curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards within print and material rich learning environments that are highly structured to support each child’s individual learning, growth and development. A structured social emotional curriculum enhanced by Get Ready to Learn, a yoga therapy program, fosters the academic and personal behavioral readiness of students. This structured, strategic approach to successful early learning as a predictor for future academic success has gained this nine-month old school noted citywide recognition. The school has been selected to participate in “The Chancellor’s 40 Initiative” to begin a Dual Language Program for the 2015-2016 school year receiving a \$25,000 grant for implementation. They have also received a grant to expand their Transitional Bilingual Program.
- Lesson plans in all subjects consistently include a pre- and post-assessment, core vocabulary, hands-on materials, and a selection of tasks revised by teachers during collaborative work sessions to meet the cognitive needs of all students at the most appropriate level of rigor. Preplanned question stems are incorporated into planning to provide access to concepts and skills taught based on individual student need as well as groupings that are established and revised based on cyclical benchmarking data using the ABLLS assessment. Additionally, students’ individual goals are integrated into plans so that there are maximum opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals to address IEP goals in an integrated way during small group content-specific instruction and during skills-based centers. Centers function to enrich, extend or remediate skills and strategies that have been taught in the classroom in order to target and elicit 1:1 responses from each child which translates into IEP progress monitoring data.
- The school implements thoughtfully paced core curricula supplemented by targeted literacy and math interventions for identified student cognitive ability groups based on an analysis of data and the complementary portfolio of student work and other programmatic-specific diagnostics. This tiered structure serves to provide direct instruction in the mastery of students’ individualized literacy and mathematics goals. One parent reports, “My daughter didn’t speak now she can make a sentence: I love you, Mommy. I want to go to school.”

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices across classrooms, based on the Danielson Framework, reflect the school's belief that students learn best when engaged in lessons that support learning readiness, are hands-on, and adapted so that all students have cognitive access to content and can participate in deep thinking.

Impact

Students of all ability levels have access to curricula and attend to challenging work leading to work products that reflect levels of higher order thinking, as appropriate.

Supporting Evidence

- Rooted in the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the school's belief system espouses that planning and teaching need to reflect scaffolded instruction so that all students have access to learning and deep thinking. Norming, facilitated by instructional cabinet, happened early in the year by establishing teacher-generated "look fors" relevant to the unique needs of their population. Norming has continued throughout the school year, particularly during planned inter-visitations. For example, one first year teacher reports that in the beginning of the school year her differentiation techniques were not meeting the needs of all her students. Through a better understanding of the Framework for Teaching as supported by the school and her peers, she now has better scaffolding strategies that provide her students with the correct entry point into the writing curriculum which is leading to work products reflecting appropriately high levels of thinking for each of her students.
- A belief in student ownership for life-long success supported by a positive disposition toward learning is addressed by a side-by-side approach: academics and personal behaviors together to ensure achievement by all students. A Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) program Stop, Look and Listen as well as Get Ready to Learn (GRTL), a yoga movement program, are both integrated into every class schedule as reflected in classrooms' Flow of the Day. Teachers provide the school's young students time to reflect on their engagement with learning at the end of each instructional period as a way to promote students' internalization of specific skills and to foster students' overall ownership for their learning. "I have to wait and keep my hands to myself," as one student stated. Teachers report that the school's social/emotional stance alongside academic learning is accelerating students' academic progress. One parent sees her son advancing very well. "He was aggressive before and less so now. He's writing better, understanding sentences more."
- Across classrooms, students of varying ability levels were actively engaged in learning and peer-to-peer interaction as appropriate. Classroom environments are highly structured as well as print and material rich across the organization. A myriad of strategies and practices support students' access to learning tasks that require high levels of cognitive engagement through use of individual work schedules, learning stations with Individualized Education Plan (IEP) driven work tasks, leveled libraries, technology including communication devices, tools such as the Picture Exchange Communication system PECS, timers, teacher-made activities, and use of choice-making. A three-tiered learning structure is consistent across classrooms. Whole class direct instruction is followed by small homogeneous group interaction and then to one-to-one intervention in skill-based centers giving students access to grade level concepts as well as explicit instruction based on their functional level.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teachers and teacher teams consistently collaborate to analyze student data and information, particularly for students they are focused on, making connections to classroom practices in support of the curriculum and in driving school goals.

Impact

Teacher collaborations support the development of teacher practices, consistently strengthening staff instructional capacity and ensuring all students make progress toward academic and individual goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff members engage in a variety of professional learning and engagement opportunities that are inclusive of their needs and their input in alignment with school and student goals, creating a cohesive culture of practices and shared improvements that impact student learning. Within this approach, repurposed work days on Mondays alternate cycles of teaching, learning, and development. Agendas indicate targeted topics based on formal and informal observations as well as from on-going conversations with staff. Topics include norming practices based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, using assessment to drive Instruction, adaptations to standards-based curriculum to meet the range of student needs, and quality Individual Education Plans (IEPs). On alternating weeks, structured inter-visitation cycles allow teachers to self-initiate their professional next steps. Teachers articulate the value of this structure and could share new practices implemented based on peer support. This school-wide practice takes place within sites, and introductory materials and information is provided virtually and through weekly e-mails prior to the start of a cycle.
- Teacher teams analyze qualitative and quantitative student data to consider possible adjustments to planning and/or instructional delivery. One teacher states that he has received support learning how to better scaffold lessons to meet the varying cognitive needs of his students. Another teacher references her past struggle in engaging a wheelchair bound student who has profound intellectual delays. Through teacher collaboration she has learned how to incorporate sensory and music-based techniques into her plans. She reports her student is now stimulated to engage and his body movements indicate he is getting stronger and more alert.
- Teachers can provide rationale for their team's collective thinking around the instructional decisions being made as part of planning and small group instruction and how that applies to the adjustments each teacher is making given the particular students they teach. Subsequently, the lead teacher, who maintains an out-of-classroom coaching position, follows up by supporting implementation of the agreed-upon strategy with each teacher individually. Logs from this classroom support are reviewed by the school's instructional cabinet and serve as feedback that cycles back as additional data to inform future team meetings facilitated by the lead teachers. Administration and teachers share the responsibility of identifying workshop selections, and, when teachers return from an external training, administration and teachers debrief one-to-one. This leads to a variety of reciprocal teaching opportunities, one example being planned team facilitation during extended Mondays.