



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Archer Elementary School

Elementary School X531

**1827 Archer Street
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Zakariah Haviland

**Date of review: January 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Maria Giacone**

The School Context

Archer Elementary School is an elementary school with 427 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 4. The school population comprises 28% Black, 61% Hispanic, 1% White, 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 7% Asian, and 1% multi-racial students. The student body includes 20% English language learners and 22% 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 92.0%.

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	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	Additional Findings	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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

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. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress.

Impact

School leaders' high expectations result in staff awareness of instructional expectations. Parents are aware of their children's' academic progress as well as school-wide expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- During a leadership meeting, the principal stated that the school-wide instructional focus is to develop students' critical thinking skills. To this end, school leaders provide training through professional development sessions and conferences with teachers, and provide feedback on lesson observations to communicate high expectations on rigorous instruction. A review of lesson observations revealed that cognitive engagement to promote higher order thinking is a constant focus. For example, one comment addressed the strategic use of graphic organizers to allow students to engage in "deeper thinking about what they had read." A comment to another teacher stated that "students were able to give strong answers," and suggested that the teacher not provide evidence to push the pace of the discussion but rather, allow time for "more partner or small group discussion or more student-moderated whole-class discussion" so that students can develop their thinking skills.
- The principal communicates to the staff the implementation of a new structure for this year. Following an observation, some teachers receive next steps that involve working with a coach on a specific aspect of instruction. These next steps are shared via a Google Doc that all administrators, cabinet members, and coaches can access. This allows administrators to ensure that teachers are receiving the proper supports and hold them accountable for implementing the supports by conducting informal and formal observations.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about their focus on building critical thinking skills that students can apply across contexts. Class and student goals are planned to achieve higher order thinking skills. For example, the 5th grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class had as a focus perspective and point of view. Students were asked to research a given topic and then present to other classes. Teachers explained that at first, they concentrated on the "Wh" questions, but that now they work with Bloom's taxonomy of questioning to allow students to arrive at judgments about situations such as the pros and cons of cutting down the rainforest, and build toward judging the decisions made by various authors of articles.
- During a parent meeting, parents identified the school-wide instructional focus. One parent said, "The goal is to apply what they learn in one subject to another subject." They explained that teachers and administrators keep them informed of their children's progress towards school goals and individual academic goals through such venues as one-on-one parent meetings, workshops, monthly "Tea and Talks" with school leaders, website links, phone calls, and letters sent home.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across the school, teaching strategies allow all students to be engaged in challenging tasks. Opportunities to embed strategic supports that allow greater student initiative and extended discussions within student groups so students can take ownership of their work vary across classrooms.

Impact

Curricular supports across classrooms promote meaningful student work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners to participate actively and take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teachers introduced various entry points to allow access to the curriculum for different groups of students. For example, in a 1st grade class, students were offered a choice of animals to research. In a self-contained 1st grade class, students were given strategy charts to refer to during a math lesson and were purposely paired in “sage and scribe” partnerships to do their work. In a grade 5 ICT class, students had examples of interpreting the remainder that they could refer to in completing their task while other groups had planning pages and pictures. Student work groups in this class worked on the same task but with different numerical values according to the level of the group. While a variety of scaffolds and differentiated tasks were employed to assist lower level and on-level students, there were few extensions for higher-level groups.
- Across classrooms visited, students were engaged in challenging tasks and asked to demonstrate higher-order thinking. For example, in a 1st grade class students were asked to generate a list of questions to ask their neighbor about the animal they researched. In a 1st grade self-contained class, the teacher asked students to write a subtraction sentence by selecting their own starting number and using the strategy shown in the day’s lesson or a strategy of their own to then share. In a 4th grade class students were asked to discuss with their neighbor what strategy they were planning to use to solve a problem and explain why. Then they were asked to work independently to use the strategy and monitor it by referring to their rubric at the “practitioner” level to effectively describe and communicate their strategy.
- Student discussions gave evidence of high levels of student thinking. For example, in a grades 4-5 bridge class, the teacher stated, “Colonists believe only children should play. True or False? Go to your corners and discuss.” In their discussion groups, children referred to their notes to form opinions. In a 5th grade ICT class, students working in groups engaged in debate on whether to multiply or divide to solve a problem. While students were engaged in high level discussions across classrooms, there were missed opportunities to have peers guide or critique their fellow students so as to increase engagement, participation, and ownership of their learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards, and academic tasks are refined using student work to provide access to curricula for all students.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions align with the Common Core instructional shifts, promote college and career readiness, and respond to students' needs ensuring cognitive engagement by all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curriculum units revealed alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards through Go Math and Expeditionary Learning as well as teacher modifications to promote college and career readiness. For example, the school incorporated Exemplars into the math curriculum, which allows students to focus on reading and interpreting complex word problems and requires students to choose and employ a problem-solving strategy.
- A review of lesson plans showed that Common Core Learning Standards alignment is mirrored in the teaching targets. For example, a grade 3 lesson objective states that students will use the paragraph writing checklist, revised with evidence, to complete their writing and that students will discuss the evidence they found with partners. A grade 5 objective states that students will determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details.
- Across grades and subjects, all lesson plans reviewed included adjustments to the unit plans by documenting ways work products or processes were differentiated to allow every student, including ELLs and students with disabilities access to instruction and academic tasks. For example, planning for a 1st grade class included assigning students of different levels to Kagan cooperative learning groups; planning for a 3rd grade class that included English language learners showed three different groups with leveled materials for guided reading—a group that needed to catch up on their work, a high level reading group, and a third group for individualized attention.
- During a teacher meeting observed, the 5th grade team noted that students were able to find relevant evidence to support their claim but were not making logical inferences. They adjusted an English Language Arts unit plan by introducing a planning page to guide students with the aid of a checklist based on the task and rubric. This allowed students to think through their ideas and develop their own plan as they monitored their work.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school, teachers use common assessments, track student progress and consistently check for understanding as well as provide opportunities for students to assess their own work.

Impact

The school's systems to monitor progress through data analysis as well as during instruction are used to guide adjustments in curriculum and instruction to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use the results from assessments to make instructional decisions. A data meeting summary sheet for 2nd grade shows the analysis of the assessment to see which students are meeting goals, actions to be taken including instructional strategies, grouping adjustments, and systems and supports to increase student progress. For example, based on the Fountas and Pinnell running records, teachers noted which students specifically had made progress and which had not, decided on actions to take which included differentiated strategies in small groups and computer-based phonics, and put in place targeted academic intervention services (AIS) for the next instructional cycle.
- The school's data team meets bi-monthly to examine assessment data. Data-based decisions include introducing Expeditionary Learning, twenty minutes of sustained silent reading (SSR) blocks, and explicit writing instruction in upper grades ELA. When assessment results in math revealed that students struggled to complete all parts of multi-step problems, the decision was made to incorporate the use of Exemplars. The same cohort of students went from a 5% math proficient rate in 3rd grade to a 21% proficient rate in 4th grade.
- Across classrooms visited, teachers used various checks for understanding to monitor student work and make adjustments to instruction. Checks for understanding included circulating and stopping to ask questions, conferencing with students, and giving class instructions based on what they were seeing. For example, in a 3rd grade class the teacher saw that as students were revising their written work, they were not looking specifically for evidence when they were checking off that item on a checklist. She paused their writing to tell the class to identify the sentence or sentences in their writing by marking them before they continued. She also reminded them to add their personal reflections on the bottom of their sheets.

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

Teacher teams engage in professional collaborations by analyzing assessment data and student work. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

Teacher team collaborations result in refinement of pedagogy, improved progress toward goals for groups of students and shared leadership that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Grade teams are structured to look at student work and data to review instruction and tasks in order to make appropriate adjustments. For example, during a teacher team meeting, the 5th grade team looked at samples of student writing and normed their scoring. Then they discussed next steps. They noticed that students were supplying details but were not interpreting their relevance to the claim. Their next steps were to have students analyze the question and task to determine what it was asking students to do.
- When the 5th grade team met to look at student work in math regarding the division of whole numbers, along with their conferencing notes, they used this information to determine flexible student grouping. Tasks were revised to connect to real world situations using shopping as a topic.
- Teachers have a voice in making key decisions that affect student learning and teacher practice. For example, during school-wide professional development sessions, teachers formulated the school-wide instructional focus. They also make decisions regarding how teams should be run. While there were designated team leaders last year, this year there are no designated leaders, teachers self-select their roles. School leadership and teachers expressed that there is much more active teacher engagement and ownership by all teachers on a team.