



Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Lyons Community School

Middle-High School K586

**223 Graham Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Taeko Onishi

**Date of review: December 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Gary Knight**

The School Context

Lyons Community School is a middle-high school with 539 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 40% Black, 56% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 10% English Language Learners and 23% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 88.3%.

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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry based, professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership capacity.

Impact

Instructional capacity is strengthened; the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards are promoted, and teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The teacher team model is the premise of the organizational structure at the school. The teams include, grade, department, inquiry and management team. The policy team is responsible for school wide policy decision-making. The leaders often meet with their teams to discuss school wide goals, day to day expectations and overall functioning and teacher practices without administration. Team leaders then meet with the school administration to discuss topics covered and any issues or concerns that arose.
- The grade 10 team was engaged in the inquiry based professional collaboration process at the time of the visit. They were analyzing the work of six students who were performing in the mid to low range when compared to peers. The student work focused on annotation, which is a focus across content areas.
- Based on professional collaborations and looking at student data, teacher teams across subjects came together to determine best practices to improve students' performance with argumentative writing. The teachers agreed to incorporate "the hamburger paragraph" to assist students with their writing. This approach was noted in multiple classes and subjects throughout the day.
- The English Language Arts team engaged in inquiry based collaborations around periodic assessments, aligning questions to Common Core Learning Standards and extracting skills that were then shared across content areas to increase school wide literacy.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices consistently provide multiple entry points, are aligned to the curricula, and reflect an articulated set of beliefs.

Impact

Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills in student work products. However due to lack of high quality supports and extensions in a vast majority of classrooms, there were missed opportunities to push students to be further challenged.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classes, multiple entry points were in evidence. For example, in a grade 7 English Language Arts class, students were presented with information via technology, to complement instruction and were provided various graphic organizers and question prompts for reading passages. Similarly, in a grade 10 Global History class, students were provided a graphic organizer to guide their writing, a suggested outline sheet and a laptop.
- Teaching practices included questioning which was evidenced as the Global History teacher pushed student thinking as he circulated and conferenced with them one on one. While in a theater class, questioning was evidenced as a means of engaging students in tasks and pushing their thinking. For example, "When an actor walks out on stage to do their job, are you watching that person or something else? Do they become another person? Are you going to see them or their character?"
- In a grade 11 neuroscience class, multiple entry points such as the use of technology, writing, and diagramming were also in evidence. The lesson also included an extension activity. Students who completed task, were to reflect on the activity and process to that point. An extension activity was only in evidence in one of the seven classes visited.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work.

Impact

The curricula are coherent, promote college and career readiness, and provide access to cognitively engaging tasks for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- As a recent addition to the consortium schools, Lyons has transitioned from Regents exams to Performance Based Assessment Tasks (PBAT). The consortium work is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. PBATs are mandatory in all four major content areas requiring students to engage in more complex nonfiction texts and to cite evidence to support claim.
- The school works with curriculum planning partners to revise previous unit plans and to develop new units to align to consortium curricula. Revisions include more varied reading and greater depth with fewer topics. The school also has been purposeful in vertically aligning curricula as well.
- Based on student data, such as previous Regents exams, it was revealed that students struggled with literacy skills. As a result, the school has planned academic tasks to implement common literacy skills school wide. Some of the strategies used with the students include, “hamburger” paragraph writing, annotating text and specific Kylene Beers strategies when interacting with text.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and are used to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement, and results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the consortium's graduation PBAT rubric as their assessment tool in addition to the development of benchmark rubrics. In addition, the school conducts a "Kid Talk" activity that addresses strengths, challenges and next steps with students. Teachers take notes and provide comments and feedback to students.
- Teachers use Google Apps to track student performance. The process of receiving, assessing, recording and returning work to students is streamlined with the use of the Teacher Dashboard online grading system. It allows for student interface and provides immediate feedback and next steps. The Dashboard also allows teachers to look at students' work over time. A grade 12 student articulated that the feedback she received, which was to analyze more, introduce quote and add details, caused her to be successful with her 10-page essay on race and economic equality.
- The school administers three grade-wide narrative non-fiction assessments a year to measure growth in literacy. The inquiry teams conduct an analysis of these assessments to determine student progress towards goals and to determine next instructional steps.
- Twice a year during Regents week, students perform a roundtable where they do presentations in every subject. They are grouped with a teacher and/or a community member. Teachers ask questions to check for understanding and to determine whether students connect to larger ideas in the task they performed.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school leaders consistently communicate high expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness to the entire staff and families.

Impact

A system of accountability is established for those expectations, and students and families understand progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Within the various distributive leadership teams, the leaders meet with their respective teams to discuss school wide expectations. The assistant principal meets with the team leaders on a weekly basis to review expectations and address any concerns, and observations offering specific and differentiated feedback are conducted by administration.
- The expectations for staff begin during the recruitment phase, where candidates are asked very specific questions to determine whether the candidate’s mindset matches the underlying philosophy of the school. In addition to professional development for entire staff regarding expectations, all first year teachers are provided with mentors with whom they meet on a weekly basis to help develop and support their work in meeting expectations. Expectations are also emphasized during quarterly staff meetings, online via Google docs, and reinforced with a scheduled week-in-review time for staff to reflect on practices and outcomes.
- Consortium expectations regarding roundtables, Performance Based Assessment Tasks and overall academics are shared with students and families in several ways. Every three weeks families are invited in to school to have conversations regarding their children’s academics. Reciprocal emails are sent between home and school, and cycle phone calls are made. Further information is shared via the online grading system, student-family conferences, and Tier I and Tier II circles that include students and family members to discuss the use of strategies for academic and social emotional supports.