



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**A.C.E. Academy for Scholars at the Geraldine  
Ferraro Campus**

**Elementary School Q290**

**55-20 Metropolitan Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11385**

**Principal: Mieasia Harris**

**Date of review: January 26, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

## The School Context

A.C.E. Academy for Scholars at the Geraldine Ferraro Campus is an elementary school with 548 students from grade K through grade 5. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 20% Asian, 3% Black, 47% Hispanic, and 28% White students. The student body includes 8% English Language Learners and 11% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.8%.

## 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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</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 <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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts through emphasizing rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills embedded in a coherent way across grades and content areas. Additionally, tasks are planned and refined using student work and data for all scholars (term used by school leaders and staff to reference students).

### Impact

College and career readiness is promoted for all scholars, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, across grades and content areas through demonstration of higher-order skills while ensuring access to the curricula and tasks is at a cognitively engaging level.

### Supporting Evidence

- All curriculum documents are created by teachers across grades and content areas and have defined expectations for scholar outcomes with “I can” statements. School leaders stated this was strategically done so scholars can comprehend their learning expectations throughout a lesson and it creates “a friendly language that allows the scholars to interpret the standards in their own words,” resulting in coherence that promotes college and career readiness. Common Core Learning Standard 2.RL.3 states: describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges. Teachers have generated the following “I can” statement to reflect a more friendly and interpretive standard to support the students better: “I can analyze the problem in a narrative and try to predict the solution.” and “I can analyze characters internal qualities and make determinations about the character based on what I have learned.”
- A review of lesson plan documents lists each instructional period learning target in terms of rigorous tasks for individual or groups of scholars to achieve during the lesson. Additionally, scaffolds are identified and provided based on the scholar’s current standards-based, ability level, including information regarding their writing skill based on previous and current writing unit and conference notes. Multiple graphic organizers are created for groups of scholars including, low-, mid-, and high-level, and separately for English Language Learners as necessary. Graphic organizers may also include sections for vocabulary word identification or opportunities for brainstorming ideas about how to include specific content-related vocabulary.
- Lesson plans include purposeful extensions for teaching the content to groups of scholars who may benefit from the additional support. A math planning document extends the discussion for scholars to turn and talk, “How does a common multiple relate to a common denominator?” An English Language Arts lesson plan asks students to “begin reading their just right book in their group and answer their questions and provide text evidence.” A reading lesson plan includes an extension for scholars to add to the class chart with facts that support the pros and cons of recycling by completing a sticky note and a reading of the opposing opinion.

## Area of Focus

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

### Impact

Teacher inquiry practices strengthen the instructional capacity although not necessarily resulting in increased student achievement for all students, especially those they do not share. Additionally, teacher team practices typically result in improved teacher practice for selected or identified students, not groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- During an observation of an inquiry team, several staff members communicated that they benefit from the inquiry time because “although we have different backgrounds, years of experience, and different students, we continue to grow professionally,” and “it shapes the way we approach our teaching objective.” They additionally shared the inquiry approach has strengthened their instructional capacity by affording them the opportunity to bring the objectives to life and discuss how they tackle the content in their classroom. Specifically, teachers stated students who may be below level and in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class can be the focus with similar work expectations to help close the achievement gap. However, data discussed during the meeting did not reveal identified scholar groups across grades and content areas being targeted for improving assessments results during the inquiry team meeting discussion.
- Scholar work samples were reviewed at varying performance levels during an inquiry meeting. Samples included one student work product for each of the following levels or group of students: Level 4, Level 3, English Language Learner, and student with disability. It was not discussed or apparent how the selected student work samples may represent the whole targeted population. Teachers discussed how the Level-4 students’ sample may be so sophisticated “in his wittiness and inclusion of humor in writing” that “it is too advanced and may cause problems with our English Language Learners who are trying to make a connection.” A suggestion to “pull another more normal Level 4” scholar work sample for the next meeting was offered by a teacher. Teachers did provide next steps for the following meeting including a need to look further at Level 1 and Level 2 work, in addition to make modifications to the current lesson plan timeline where transition words and paragraph organization would be reviewed in class.
- The school leaders shared that teacher teams meet weekly for a 90 minute grade team meeting, 45 minute vertical team meeting, and 80 minute professional development session. The vertical teams are structured to support Common Core Learning Standards based on the need of the students in programs such as gifted and talented, general education, and/or Integrated Co-Teaching. Vertical team members explained that one evident impact of their work was on elevating school-wide expectations through coherence of the standards-based curricula, although an increase in student achievement was not suggested as an impact or was evident.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how scholars learn best through effective communication, peer collaboration, rigorous instruction, and focus on the instructional shifts.

### Impact

Scholars demonstrate clear thinking, participation, and ownership of their work based on the school's core beliefs while ensuring all scholars are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

### Supporting Evidence

- A belief shared by school leaders and staff about how scholars learn best throughout subjects and grades include engaging scholars in group discussions and “creating groups based on a myriad of things such as guided reading, math games, and intervention tasks,” according to school leaders. Additionally, choice was often observed for scholars throughout classroom visits, including math packet selection, writing topic selection, game choice, book reading selection, and math strategy used to solve a problem.
- During a grade 4 math lesson, the scholars were assigned to specific groups and tasks to work on. The teacher facilitated a discussion with one group to identify scholar misconceptions using a practice referred to as “the rookie mistake.” Scholars were using a scholar's work sample from the prior day's lesson and providing evidence both verbally and in written steps as to how to correct the misconception. Several scholars shared out what they took away from this exercise and “how it showed us what we had to do.” Other scholars were engaged in math games with fractions in which they compared least to greatest with a partner and had to correct each other's responses for accuracy. At another game table, scholars played a game of interpreting remainders and were fully able to explain they were being given this challenge because of their success with yesterday's exit ticket.
- During a grade 1 lesson, scholars discussed what a simile is. Scholars then continued their independent writing using a personal choice event, such as playing with their dog or the fear of spiders. They wrote while referring to their self-written goal cards to ensure they were challenged appropriately and engaged in their work while using a checklist.
- Many of the lessons permitted the students to engage in a variety of tasks and demonstrate their thinking at high levels through writing or discussion. Turn and talk was often seen as an opportunity for students to challenge one another's thinking based on the level of discussion witnessed. In a kindergarten class, a scholar shared her understanding of numbers on a number line to the whole class after all students engaged in a brief partner talk about their thoughts on the correct answer. In a grade 5 class discussion on the Jim Crow Laws, a scholar explained why the chapter is interesting while another scholar is writing about the revolution in the book *Heart and Soul* and how young people took advantage of the moment. One scholar identified the most important sentence from the paragraph in his writing organizer and how he knew that was the most important sentence, in addition to providing supporting detail from the text.

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

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school’s curricula and offer a clear portrait of scholar mastery. A varied use of ongoing checks for understanding and scholar self-assessment is also evident.

### Impact

Actionable and meaningful feedback is given to scholars so classroom teachers and scholars are able to make effective adjustments to their work and be aware of the next steps in the learning process for planning and instruction in the classroom.

### Supporting Evidence

- Checks for understanding include using scholar work samples under a digital camera both during and following a lesson. During a grade 5 Integrated Co-Teaching class, a student was asked to explain her thought process using her work sample displayed on the front board. Other students were told to track her progress and determine if her steps were accurate. The teacher asked specific clarifying questions and allowed the students to discuss her steps with a partner for deeper understanding as well. Additionally, the teacher circulated the classroom during discussions and checked on the progress of each scholar prior to having it modeled in front of the class. In a grade 2 gifted and talented class, the digital camera was used to have a student share out their findings about recycling materials and landfills. Other scholars asked if they could “give her some feedback,” and shared out “she could work on finding more detail in the text to support her amazing facts,” and “I like how she really showed what she thought was important with [highlighting] stars.” The scholar presenting appreciated the feedback and said they work to improve their writing.
- Feedback provided on rubrics is specifically designed to provide students with meaningful next steps though both highlights on the provided rubric and additional comments either written in the margins or on attached paper. Additionally, for students who would benefit from translated comments, they were often provided with feedback in Spanish. Some typed teacher comments noted on student work attached to a completed rubric suggested the students push themselves to think about why they are performing the operation and how. In a grade 1 class, the teacher provided a suggestion and asked the scholar to rewrite the suggestion in her own words to increase awareness and support implementation. Following the teacher’s suggestion the scholar rewrote she will “fix it by writing what happened in the beginning” to Stella Luna.
- Peer assessment and self-assessment are frequent practices emphasized by the teachers. Students would suggest a glow and grow on many of the documents from their peers and offer suggestions to move the student work product up a level on the rubric such as “next time you should check your work to get a 4 on understanding mathematical concepts,” or “next time I think you should add why you multiplied and added everything in your explanation.” In some classes, peer-assessment required scholars to include two different colored sticky notes on the assignment indicating a glow and grow for next time.
- Grading policies are established uniformly across the grades and content areas where benchmark assessments are provided to guide scholars to a path of understanding. Individual teachers use formative assessments, progress monitoring assessment, and rubric results to modify instruction for groups of similar performing scholars and display group assignments in class for scholar awareness.

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

School leaders and staff consistently engage in practices that communicate high expectations among them, and offer feedback to all students, including high-need subgroups, that are connected to knowing next steps and a path to college and career readiness.

### Impact

Students understand their next steps towards college and career expectations and are aware of supports in place that help them own their educational experience through the development of a culture of mutual accountability for high expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- As aligned to the instructional focus and training, the staff provides significant feedback to scholars regarding their awareness of next steps and communicates the path to preparation for success in the higher grades including college. When selected scholars were asked if they plan to attend college, all raised their hand. One 5<sup>th</sup> grader articulated that she plans “to go to culinary school” because it will allow her to be globally connected with people through learning about the various styles of food. Others shared that the school is helping them prepare for middle school through the curriculum content and provision of guidance booklets. Several grade 3 scholars shared they went to New York University this past year. Also, they know that the school’s graduation ceremonies are focused on the “Journey to College”.
- Teachers engage in reflective feedback loops through informal and formal observation conversation aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers in conjunction with school leaders facilitate discussions and coaching sessions that have led to a growth in their practices as evident by the ratings on teacher Annual Peer Performance Review (APPR) evaluations. No teacher has had an overall Advance component rating as either developing or ineffective since the school’s inception.
- Bulletin boards displayed throughout the building showcase various levels of scholar mastery with appropriate feedback for scholars to reflect on. All bulletin boards included the display of scholar work, the assignment task, and rubric for understanding. Additionally, titles were often displayed such as “Division is Snow Much Fun” with regard to a math assignment. Certificates of acknowledgment for best class attendance by month were displayed on the outside of classroom doors and signed by the principal as well.
- Students shared they are aware of their role in their success through the communication the teacher provides them in the form of glows and grows and verbal feedback. One student specifically said she knows how she needs to improve based her “partner’s glows and grows which help me.” Others shared they are aware of their need to improve their writing because the rubric they get back along with the comments suggest how to change their point of view or inclusion of more evidence.
- Enrichment activities are offered to all scholars’ afterschool and more than 40% stay for programs including art, music and architecture, in addition to core content support. According to school leaders, course offerings were suggested by students through surveys of what they wanted to engage in so they could better experience a “road map to college and career”.