



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. X015 Institute for Environmental Learning

Elementary-Middle School X015

**2195 Andrews Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Tara Edmonds

**Date of review: March 29, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

P.S. X015 Institute for Environmental Learning is an elementary-middle school with 497 students from grade kindergarten through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 13% Black, 85% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 7% English Language Learners and 20% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.5%.

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	Developing
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
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, through training, and ongoing communication. The school communicates expectations to students and families and keeps them abreast of student progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact

The school maintains a system of accountability toward expectations amongst staff and helps families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Above and beyond the weekly parent engagement contact, via phone, email, or in-person meetings, the upper grade staff also communicates with the home through an online grade book called *Teacher's Ease*, which has a parent and student portal. The lower grades do not use an online grade book, but instead issue additional progress reports and a daily folder that often includes communiqués. Students stated that they check *Teacher's Ease* at least once a week, if not twice. One student stated that she always checks after a big assignment. Parents stated that they are very pleased with the level of communication from the teachers and administration, even though the school was without a parent coordinator for several months. Teachers provide parents with monthly grade level newsletters regarding non-negotiable expectations, content focus, and support at home. Teachers in the upper grades provide parents and students a syllabus at the start of the year, outlining class expectations.
- Parents shared the strong support they receive with the high school selection process through workshops, school fairs and tours, specialized test application, and the completion of applications through the support of the counselor. Students stated that the guidance counselor supported them in making important decisions stating, "It was a fun but stressful process." Students agreed as one summed it up stating, "The counselor helped me to consider my choices and to select the best schools for me." Students agreed that the school helps to prepare them for college and career because, "We took the specialized exam and although not all of us got high enough scores, we did well but not well enough and we can retake it next year. We know it is no joke and we need to study more."
- Administration provides staff with consistent messages regarding expectations, through delineated school goals, staff handbook, weekly messages, and aligned professional development. Administration and teachers agree that most professional development occurs during the teacher teams by grade level and or combining two grades, since there is only one teacher per grade. In order to guide and keep track of goals, they have mapped out a suggested list of professional development for the year. To monitor the implementation of these professional learning sessions, a system of follow-up includes frequent classroom observations and actionable feedback as well as coaching from the assistant principals to ensure that staff is working toward the school's achievement goals.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies are becoming aligned to the curricula, beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best, and inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions are not always accessible to all students.

Impact

As a result of uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in work products for all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, high levels of student thinking and participation are not yet consistently reflected, as defined by the instructional shifts and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Supporting Evidence

- The staff believe that students learn best when “Students receive instruction to meet their needs through multiple entry points and differentiated instruction with teachers teaching to students’ needs in different ways and tasks or texts to move away from teacher-centered and towards student-centered classrooms.” However, these beliefs are only beginning to be implemented with consistency across classrooms.
- In some classes the lessons were teacher-centered instead of student-centered. In an upper grade ELA class although students were reading rigorous text, the teacher reviewed vocabulary words and then asked low-level Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions and students answered in incomplete sentences, often single words, with multiple missed opportunities for students to discuss in pairs or whole class. Sample questions include, “What did he give her?”, “Who does he work for?”, and “Which is the ‘what?’” The questions left students guessing, without supporting their answers with text evidence. Similarly in a lower-grade ELA class, although students used accountable talk stems to answer teacher-directed questions, the teacher selected the same few students to answer. Students in turn raised their hands to answer the questions in a Ping-Pong fashion from teacher-to-student and back to the teacher again. Students did not have the opportunity to discuss or demonstrate their thinking. Additionally, some students were sitting on the rug while others were in their seats during the visit. According to the lesson plan, the teacher had pulled those on the rug for support work by the teacher, but this differentiated instruction did not occur. Instead the teacher-directed questioning occurred.
- In some classes, students were provided multiple entry points into materials, while in others it was inconsistently provided. In a self-contained English Language Arts (ELA) class students worked on the same graphic organizer to note inferences. Students had opportunities to share their thinking with their partners, however so softly it was difficult for the teacher to hear. In an upper grade Regents science class, students worked in groups to classify rocks. Students had paraprofessional support and received a colorful graphic organizer demonstrating rock types. In a social studies class students collaboratively worked to sort quotations and photos into groups of loyalists or patriots. Although students were able to do the task, the teacher guided the debrief in a back-and-forth manner, repeating students’ statements, with missed opportunities to visually demonstrate the groupings on the SMARTboard for this class with a large portion of students with disabilities. In a lower grade math class, although the differentiated activities were planned, they were not implemented during the visit because of uneven pacing during lesson.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty adopted selected curricula to ensure that they are providing instruction aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and using student data to plan and refine rigorous academic tasks.

Impact

The school's adoption and refinement of curricula enable school wide coherence and college and career readiness for all students. Academic tasks provide opportunities for all students to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration shared that over the past three years the staff have collaboratively adjusted and integrated the Common Core-aligned adopted materials to meet their students' needs since almost 30% are either English Language Learners (ELLs) or students with disabilities. Staff determined that students with disabilities and ELLs would benefit from materials that break down concepts and provide additional scaffolds, so to that end staff adopted Glencoe for English Language Arts (ELA) and Scott Foresman. The staff utilize *Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)*, *GO Math!* and *EngageNY* for the lower grades and *EngageNY* for ELA, social studies, and science and *Connected Math Project 3 (CMP3)*, for the upper grades. Although these are the main curricula, staff stated that they use multiple sources for their curricula, finding sources to meet students' needs. Staff explained they adjust curricula based on student needs. Based on student data, staff adjusted a particular reading from grade 5 ELA map with high-text complexity and placed it at the end of grade 4, however assessment data demonstrated students did not comprehend this material well. As a result, staff moved the text from the end of grade 4 to the beginning of grade 5. The high Lexile level was less of a struggle for students at the beginning of grade 5 with support and scaffolding by teachers, students were able to comprehend the text.
- A review of curriculum maps and lesson plans indicated that teachers have planned with agreed-upon components that include but are not limited to, Common Core Learning Standards, objective or learning target, vocabulary, activities, assessment, and homework. Curriculum maps and units are planned with the end in mind using essential questions, enduring understandings, and skills to create a view of the unit as a whole, as well as the smaller components of the lesson plan. Also evident in curriculum maps, units, and lesson plans was that teachers have developed assessments, rubrics, and scaffolds to ensure that all students have access to these Common Core-aligned curricula. Curriculum maps in literacy and math indicate that instructional shifts, especially in the areas of building fluency, perseverance, and constructing arguments are evident. Further evident are lesson revisions based on student work and data to support reteaching.
- Curriculum maps and lesson plans indicate that tasks are differentiated for ELLs and students with disabilities and include a renewed focus on comprehension. Staff started with an item and skills analysis of the New York State assessment for ELA and continued with curricula assessments to determine gaps for struggling students. They discovered that students achieved higher scores in writing than in multiple-choice questions. With this data, staff returned to the unit plans and incorporated additional comprehension and multiple-choice questions, as well as revised the flow of units throughout the year.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across the school, common assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula are utilized to identify student performance and progress toward goals.

Impact

The staff analyzes common assessments to provide a mutual lens and language to discuss student progress and inform instructional adjustments to advance student achievement, and teachers provide actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have aligned assessments to the curricula and created or aligned rubrics and checklists to support student achievement. Students know how to use rubrics and checklists. One student stated, and others agreed, “I use a rubric so I can know what the expectations are and check those against what I already have to see what I need to add.” Students agreed that rubrics and checklists are used in other subjects besides English. A student stated, “We use checklists in science when working on labs to remember steps for graphing and circle steps, to ignore making mistakes, so we are ready for the Regents.”
- Teachers provide students with feedback on their work and post it on bulletin boards, inside and outside the classrooms. Students receive actionable feedback that is rooted in the rubric language, is written on the rubric with ratings, and includes highlights and areas to improve. Students can explain their next step for ensuing assignments according to the teacher’s feedback. “We wrote an essay about how the main character changed in *Esperanza Rising*, and my teacher told me to remember to add detail to support your case, meaning to support the claims so that details will help the reader understand. I used my checklist which also helped.” Student notebooks and folders show student work that includes, to a large degree, teacher responses in actionable feedback, checkmarks, comments, and some with statements of encouragement.
- To determine student progress toward goals, teachers use common formative and summative assessments and the analysis of data. Staff implements a beginning of year (BOY) assessment and an end-of-year (EOY) which uses *Teachers’ College Reading and Writing Program* (TCRWP) running records to determine students’ reading level and this is monitored throughout the year. Additionally, staff also uses the baseline, mid-year, end-of-year from the adopted Common Core-aligned curricula, such as *Core Knowledge Language Arts*. All these assessments are maintained in students’ classroom folders.
- A consistent data cycle across the school includes teaching a lesson, analyzing student work for mastery and areas of need, creating an action plan, reteaching, regrouping, according to student need, and then reassessing. Following the action plan, teachers demonstrated the curricula revisions, based on data and student work, the revising of student groups, and how and when they teach students with different approaches. Teachers are employing a “menu of learning activities” from which students can select, grounded in a research-based strategy.
- The upper grades and a kindergarten class use an online grading program called *Teacher Ease*. Other teachers maintain grades and analysis of data by hand. Regardless, teachers communicate actionable feedback about student achievement multiple times in the year.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher Teams	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	--------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers who have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are engaged in several teams including subject teams and professional development. Since there are one to two teachers per grade, teachers meet vertically by subject. Teachers stated that sharing best practices has positively impacted their professional growth as they learn from each other. A teacher stated and others agreed that they share best practices as they plan especially to implement menu options, or choice boards, from which students select to support all to reach the same learning goal. Teachers agreed that although menu options are newly implemented as a result of observations showing that staff was not differentiating instruction, they are more confident in implementing them with the support of professional development. Teachers shared a menu for an algebra unit to strengthen weakness in graphing linear functions. One menu option was to watch a video demonstrating graphing linear functions as needed and then graph it themselves, while other groups worked on leveled worksheets according to need.
- In the grade teams, teachers stated that their function is to collaboratively look at student work using a protocol. A teacher team demonstrated the next step in this protocol and “determined what teaching and learning practices are helping student engagement and where high performing students are losing their gains.” Teachers stated that this process has helped them grow as they support each other in implementing this protocol, as some teachers are new to the grade. Teachers stated that this collegiality has supported their pedagogical growth and to that end they are seeing improvement in student learning as they grow by making instructional decisions. One teacher stated and others agreed, “This my fourth year here and I am amazed at the growth that we have shown because of the teacher team meetings. Personally, I am an exponentially better teacher than since it started.” Teachers also support each other in modifying texts to support ELLs, students with disabilities, and students who perform in the lowest third. Teachers spoke about the support they receive from a teacher who also coaches. A teacher stated and others agreed, “As a veteran, I have gone to the coach, who has helped me analyze how I teach vocabulary and helped me to make small changes to improve it.” This focus on vocabulary has shown growth across the school toward goals for increased student achievement.
- Lead teachers provide leadership in team meetings supporting lesson revisions, creating action plans based on assessment data, and developing differentiated menu activities, thus empowering teachers to make decisions about instruction, professional development, and other issues. Teacher leaders facilitate the team meetings with the support and collaboration of team members. Teachers shared examples of their empowerment to make decisions that affect the flow of the units in the curricula, based upon student data. An analysis of short answer responses showed 39% correct answers on the state test. Staff determined how to teach short answer responses and to incorporate on-demand writing. Benchmark assessments show an upward trend in these results.