Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

I.S. 313 School of Leadership Development

Middle School X313

1600 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457

Principal: Earl Brathwaite

Date of review: May 6, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción

The School Context

I.S. 313 School of Leadership Development is a middle school with 310 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 32% Black, 67% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 33% English Language Learners and 24% 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 89.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

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

Impact
There is a system of accountability for high expectations amongst staff and parents understand student progress towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate with teachers via emails, newsletters, weekly meetings, and individual conferences. The principal stated, “Teachers need to be masters of their content and be explicit in their modeling so there is student understanding. My goal is to support teacher questioning so that students can demonstrate ownership in discussions.” The principal has provided professional development for teachers both at the school and off-site. Teachers are held accountable to these expectations through observations and feedback such as “Your learning target is too broad for the students to show mastery.” Another observation noted, “Interactions were between the teacher and one student; students were not invited to speak directly to each other.”

- In a meeting with teachers, teachers stated that the school is focusing on creating lessons that allow students to demonstrate understanding and cultivate student ownership. Teachers stated that school leaders expect that students have explicit instruction with support from the teachers through modeling. Teachers stated that school leaders expect their lesson plans to follow the “I do, we do, you do” model. They stated that the school leaders provide very specific and detailed feedback on school expectations. For example, one observation on question stated, “You accepted a choral response for the most part of the lesson.” This was tied to the instructional focus with “individual responses allow other students to be able to critique the argument of others.” This was supported with specific recommendations, “We are going to meet with the math coach three or four times during your professional periods to review discussion techniques in order to focus on strategies that enable students to engage in discussions directly with one another.”

- Parents stated that they feel welcomed. The school provides them with clear expectations for student performance and progress. Parents stated they received the schoolwide grading policy which informs them how students are assessed. Parents receive progress reports in addition to report cards and texts and emails from teachers sharing student progress. Parents shared that they have attended workshops such as the grade 6 parent orientation in the summer, and in September an open house allowed them to meet teachers and hear teachers’ expectations in each subject. Parents stated that the newly instituted honor roll has brought in a stronger focus on achievement and scholarly behavior. One parent stated that her son hated school and would not attend. She added that the regular support that he receives and the clear grading policy have motivated him to want to be on the honor roll. He now attends school regularly and is doing well.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies, including scaffolds, inconsistently provide multiple entry points. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking.

Impact
As a result, students are not consistently engaged and there are missed opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking in work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- In one class of English Language Learners (ELLs), the teacher gave a lecture about the economic causes leading to the Great Depression. There was an outline on an interactive board listing the unemployment and homelessness statistics for the time. The teacher asked questions in both Spanish and English such as, “Who remembers what we need to have?”, “Who remembers the events and effects that we previously discussed?” and “Does anyone need me to translate vocabulary?” There was no evidence of a text for students to read or discuss. There was minimal student conversation. Students sat at their desk quietly and copied the notes on the board. Similarly, in a science class, students used a measuring tape to measure the circumference of different sized balls at their tables with student conversations being about procedures. Students had a sheet for recording their observations. One student measured and the others waited. When asked what they were doing and why, students only repeated the directions for the task on the worksheet.

- In a literature class the students sat in small groups with their novels and facilitated their own group discussions in Spanish. The essential question examined how racism is destructive to society as a whole. Students challenged each other using text-based evidence from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. One student stated “In this passage you can see that there is racism against this innocent black man.” Another student responded with “Yes, and remember that this is the time of segregation.” When asked what this meant in relation to the essential question, the student shared, “If we truly believe in America, it is our job to end racism because by hurting some people we limit what they can contribute and that hurts all of us.” At the next table the two girls struggled to identify the central idea of the story as courage or survival. The group challenged each other with multiple quotes from the text which provided evidence for both central ideas. When asked if it had to be one theme, one girl stated, “No. Maybe that is the answer. It is both survival and courage because it takes courage to survive.”

- In a math class studying systems of equations the teacher showed a short video of two people going up the stairs multiple times. Students were instructed to count the number of steps that the people were taking while looking at a stopwatch to see how many stairs were being climbed in a certain interval of time. Students had been grouped according to ability and had a note taker to record observations. While students had these scaffolds in place, they were unable to capture the information they needed to be able to set up the linear equations and graph, thus limiting opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades.

Impact
As a result, students receive detailed, rubric-aligned feedback and data from common assessments informs adjustments to curriculum and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Extensive student work with rubrics is on display across classrooms and hallways. Student work in math and English Language Arts (ELA) includes evidence of self-assessment, peer-assessment and teacher feedback. Feedback includes something the student did successfully, indicates an area for improvement, and provides a next step such as, "Your introduction and development was organized, had a good lead, included reasons and used transitions." The next step was "Write a conclusion that is strong and does not just repeat you lead and introduction." In a meeting with students, students shared how they had incorporated the feedback from the rubric. One student said that he was working on expanding his writing and trying to avoid repeating what he had already stated. He explained that his teacher told him to use a strategy called RACE and that it had been very helpful because he now knows that he has to include his evidence and make sure it is clear to the reader. As a result, there is evidence that students are making progress towards goals.

- In the math classrooms, students are given a weekly teacher-created formative assessments to check for mastery of the standards being taught during that week. Teachers use that data to drive their instruction for the following week. Teachers incorporate standards into their "do now" phase of the lesson. For example, when the weekly math quiz showed that students had problems solving powers raised to a power, a translation worksheet was provided and students received a step-by-step procedure worksheet to support the independent practice. In addition, analysis of the Fall Mathematics Benchmark revealed 0% mastery of the standard about knowing the properties of integer's exponents to generate equivalent numerical expression. As a result, teachers modified lesson plans to re-teach this skill and gave a quiz where 17% of the students achieved mastery and 23% received near mastery.

- In the ELA classrooms, students are assessed bi-weekly on the standards or skills being taught in the unit. Results inform instruction for each period as well as lead to schoolwide strategies. For example, teachers examined the results of a grade 8 unit in Expeditionary Learning, and noticed that students were not citing pieces of textual evident to support analysis or drawing inferences. They noticed that 72% of grade 8 students fell below the standard level. As a result, teachers across subjects modified their lessons to include the RACE strategy which supports student writing by reminding them to restate the question, answer the question, cite the evidence, and explain it. As a result of this schoolwide practice, 37% of the students achieved mastery and 63% achieved near master of the skill, with 0% student below level.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact
The use of Common Core-aligned curricula and rigorous tasks promote career and college readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *Expeditionary Learning* in order to ensure that students are engaged in non-fiction reading that uses close reading and annotation strategies. This is supplemented by the Teachers College curriculum to ensure that student are engaged in writing argumentative and informative essays. The school uses *EngageNY* as its math curriculum with a focus on the application of concepts in real world situations. This is supplemented with the *On Core Mathematics* program. The New York City Scope and Sequence for Science and Social Studies is also used at the school.

- A review of planning documents revealed that students are engaged in rigorous tasks. For example, in grade 6, students are engaged in interpreting the meaning of point of interception in two graphs looking at elevation verses time to represent motion. In grade 8, students learn to work covert standard numbers into scientific notations and be able to explain its use. In grade 8, English students are expected to write a literary essay explaining the central theme expressed by the author in novels such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *A Long Walk to Water* and *La casa en Mango Street*. In a social studies unit, students study the economic events leading to the Great Depression and discuss how the Great Depression affected the people of the United States.

- Units across subjects focus on close reading and citing textual evidence. In addition, across the school, students are consistently asked to annotate, summarize and explain their thinking including in math. For example, in a unit on graphing equations, students are expected to look at two points on a graph at a 12-second interval and determine if those points will intercept each other. Students must explain their reasoning and provide support for their answers. In a science unit of photosynthesis, students read and analyze excerpts from texts and diagrams to support how plants use energy from the sun. Lesson plans focus on the content language needed and incorporate the use of the Frayer Model for expanding vocabulary.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations where they analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact
Teacher teams are developing a protocol for inquiry with the assistance of outside support. Collaboration outcomes are not yet clearly tied to the school's academic goals and have not yet strengthened teacher instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- There is a newly established protocol for looking at student work. Prior to this, only math teachers met weekly to score quizzes and to make modification in units. Other teacher teams focused on student conferencing and academic interventions for individual students. The focus has now expanded to include looking student work to inform instructional adjustments. In this new protocol, different teachers share their lesson plans along with student work. Other teachers ask clarifying questions about the task and offer the presenter cool and warm feedback. During one teacher team meeting, teachers examined students' use of vocabulary terms, their understanding of congruent and similar angles, and their understanding of graphing dilations. Teachers in this group stated that while they have been meeting regularly they are still in the process of defining a clear protocol for presentations and how to use the student work presented by each teacher.

- While the teacher team meeting initially began with looking at student work for the math students they share and identifying areas for re-teaching, this task was not completed. The team focus changed from academic to behavioral with the presenting teacher introducing the family as well as the social emotional challenges for the students whose work was being examined.

- In another teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about the instructional focus of ensuring that there was explicit instruction with multiple opportunities for modeling. Teachers stated that this was important due to the larger numbers of ELLs. Teachers spoke about how school leaders asked them to incorporate scaffolds such as modifying texts and using organizers, however, when asked about they met this focus, teachers' conversations shifted to social behaviors. Teachers began to share the importance of appropriate classroom management such as posting the names of students who did not comply on the board with check marks next to their names.