



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Entrada Academy

Middle School X384

**977 Fox Street
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Jazmin Rivera Polanco

**Date of review: May 5, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

The School Context

Entrada Academy is a middle school with 261 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 15% Black, 80% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 33% English Language Learners and 18% 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 92.2%.

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 | Focus | Developing |
| 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 | Additional Findings | 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 | Developing |
| 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

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| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Proficient |
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff. There is a culture of learning that ensures students are aware of the school's high expectations.

Impact

Teachers are held accountable for meeting instructional expectations and students have supports that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders outline their expectations for teachers through communications, professional development, and by reinforcing the practices inherent in the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The principal sends a weekly update to the staff in which expectations are reinforced and focused on increasing student achievement. A recent update referenced expectations from the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and urged teachers to continue to “provide students with meaningful learning opportunities” and to use “pedagogical skills to truly make a difference in our student’s lives.” Written feedback to a teacher reinforced the expectation that lesson aims need to address the Common Core standards and include Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* level three and four thinking and included a reminder, as well that these expectations had been outlined in a professional development session and reiterated in a follow-up email. One school leader gave a “shout out” to a teacher who had given students the opportunity to choose which manipulatives to use, which resulted in 100% engagement.
- School leaders conduct regular classroom visits to conduct informal and formal observations of pedagogical practices and provide written feedback to teachers on each visit in order to hold teachers accountable for meeting stated expectations. Recent written feedback recognized that a teacher had provided “students with more specific standards-based feedback in response to their work.” Another observation included the direction that a teacher should require students to “answer more rigorous questions that involve explaining their thinking.”
- Students are aware of what is expected for them to be prepared for high school and college or career in the future. The student handbook exhorts students to “excel by striving towards our goals,” and also to take every opportunity to learn something new. The school day begins with a recitation of the school pledge that reminds students and staff that as lifelong learners they excel, are accountable, and determined to succeed. The guidance department coordinates high school fairs for public and private schools, organizes tours of high schools for interested students, and works with each eighth grader to complete the high school application. A parent stated, “The guidance counselor worked individually with me to help select a high school.”
- Students conduct conferences between teachers and parents. They prepare in advance for the conferences by reviewing their portfolios, reflecting on where they have met standards, and where they need to focus their efforts in the future. They also identify what support they need from their parents and their teachers. Eighty percent of this school’s former eighth graders earned enough credit in ninth grade to be on track for graduation.

Area of Focus

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.1 Curriculum | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

School leaders and teachers align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, however, the instructional shifts are inconsistently integrated. Not all tasks are modified for students with disabilities or English Language Learners.

Impact

Instruction does not yet coherently and consistently promote college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders adopted Common Core-aligned curricula such as *CMP3* for math and *Scholastic Code X* for English Language Arts (ELA). Teachers follow the State Scope and Sequence for social studies and science. Some lesson plans incorporate the instructional shifts. For example, a plan for a grade 7 social studies lesson requires students to find text evidence to support a claim about why Federalists disagreed with the Louisiana Purchase. Teachers are beginning to use a task analysis protocol to determine the alignment of curricula with the Common Core. However, the shifts are not always evident in lesson plans.
- Lesson plans reference relevant standards, such as a science lesson plan that addresses the State standards for math, science, and technology related to scientific inquiry. However, the standards referenced are not always explicitly addressed in the lesson. One lesson plan indicates it addresses the standard related to drawing evidence from informational texts, but the tasks do not require students to cite evidence from that text. The lesson plans do not always specify the activities that will take place during the lesson. For example, a lesson focusing on building a rocket from a straw includes directions for building a rocket from a balloon or an empty water bottle.
- An ELA lesson plan, with student material in both English and Spanish, calls for students to write their observations of three pictures depicting civil rights issues, and annotate and discuss a text. A math investigation from *CMP3* requires students in an Integrated Co-Teaching class to make predictions about the likelihood of outcomes and then conduct an experiment to determine if tossing a paper cup has outcomes with equal probability. This lesson plan does not include modifications for the English Language Learners (ELLs) in the class. An informal observation noted that the teacher should plan for intentional grouping of students with tasks that would be designed to meet the specific needs of each group.

Additional Findings

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| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

Teaching strategies and tasks inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

There is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and student work products and discussion reflect uneven levels of higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- Some, but not all, teachers provide texts in English and Spanish language versions to ensure high levels of engagement for ELLs. Students in a bilingual class studying the Louisiana Purchase had access to a variety of primary texts by Alexander Hamilton and other Federalists, in English and Spanish. Students in groups discussed the relationship between westward expansion and slavery. In a grade 6 ELA class, the text and the writing task on the Civil Rights Movement were provided in both languages. However, this level of differentiation was not provided in all classes.
- In a science class for students with disabilities, the instruction was not differentiated to engage all students. Several students were clearly unsure of what they were to do and how to make connections between the activity and the laws of motion that were the focus of the lesson. In another class for students with disabilities, the students were encouraged to choose which task they would complete. One group of students explained they had chosen a task that could be illustrated by drawing a map. One member of the group stated that they had made this decision because “it is in our comfort zone.”
- In a math class, students were highly engaged in finding patterns in shaded arrays of numbers from one to 100. One student focused on the unshaded numbers in an array and noticed they increased in a pattern that increased by even numbers from two to four to six and so on. Another student noticed that the shaded numbers on the same chart were square numbers. In one class, only one student had completed the Do Now while others copied the aim and Do Now in their notebooks before the teacher moved on in the lesson.

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| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Developing |
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Findings

Teachers are beginning to use and analyze results of common assessments and ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Analysis of student performance to adjust curricula is inconsistent across the school. All students do not benefit from effective instructional adjustments to meet their learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers enacted a school-wide model science investigation for all grades to prepare students to produce an end-of-year science fair project. Although the model investigation was the same for students in all grade levels, the end-of-unit project required students to prepare a detailed project proposal related to their grade level curriculum. Teachers and peers used a rubric to evaluate the proposal and give feedback to help students improve their culminating project.
- Teachers and school leaders gather and track assessment data for all grades in ELA and math. A school leader stated one goal as, “We want to catch students before they fail.” Teachers administer the Degrees of Reading Power assessment twice per year and some teachers use the results to group students for instruction. For example, one teacher grouped students according to their reading levels and social compatibility to ensure struggling students would have support from higher performing students. The math department administers baseline and interim assessments modeled on the State math assessments across grades. They gather data on student performance on these assessments by class and grade and analyze it to determine progress students are making toward mastery of the standards. Instruction is refined to address the gaps they identify from this analysis. One grade 8 class improved from 9% answered correctly on the fall baseline to 60% answered correctly on the March interim assessment. This level of assessment and analysis of results is not consistent in all departments across the school.
- Some teachers note information about student performance during individual and group work. One teacher was observed using an iPad to memorialize the level of student participation and the progress groups made toward completing tasks. For example, the teacher noted that one group had already moved on to the final task while another group was still reading and chunking the text. The teacher further noted that in one group one student seemed to be doing most of the work. Relying on these notes, the teacher determined that it would be necessary to allow more time for students to complete the task.
- Students indicated that they occasionally assess their own work and that this self-assessment is important to them as they consider revisions to their work. In one class, students completed a self- and peer-assessment of the work that they completed on a group project. On a writing piece for her portfolio, a student reflected that in order to improve her work she needs “to improve on what it means to analyze & connect my thesis to quote analysis.”

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

Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students on whom they are focused. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Teaching practice is improving and students are making progress toward their goals. Teacher decision-making and initiatives lead to improved student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- A teacher team created and implemented a school-wide writing strategy, RICE, which reminds students to restate, make an inference, cite evidence, and expand and explain. After gathering and analyzing assessments of writing, they determined that students needed to develop the habit of providing more evidence to support a claim. The team revised the components of RICE creating RICE², which requires at least two pieces of detailed evidence. Teachers adapted their practices to implement this new strategy. Students remarked that using RICE² has helped them to enrich their writing.
- A teacher team was observed analyzing samples of student work from a school-wide science lab activity on creating rockets and observing the impact of changes in design on the flight patterns. They discussed that some students were confused about the connection between the lab and Newton’s laws of motion and that they should provide additional instruction to address the gap and perhaps refine the lesson plan for the future. They shared graphic organizers that had guided students in conducting and writing about the investigation. One teacher noted that the lesson needed to be adapted to provide additional support for students with disabilities.
- Teachers lead professional development sessions for the staff. For example, teachers developed and trained each other to use a task analysis protocol. The protocol includes a graphic organizer that requires teachers to infer the task’s purpose, determine how the instructional shifts are present, and identify the connections to the school’s instructional focus. They also plan and conduct monthly town hall meetings at which students in each grade are honored and parents are invited to attend.
- Teachers implemented a new process for conducting parent-teacher conferences so that students lead conferences with parents. They created a script so that students could prepare to present their work most effectively and reflectively to their teacher and parents. Parents discussed how proud they are to hear their children reflect on their learning and explain what they are doing and how they are working to meet their goals.