



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Alexander Humboldt

Elementary School M115

**586 West 177 Street
Manhattan
NY 10033**

Principal: Boris Consuegra

**Date of review: May 7, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Manuel Ramirez/Rafaela Landin**

The School Context

Alexander Humboldt is an elementary school with 588 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 1% Black, 97% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 35% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

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	Celebration	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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administrators and staff align the curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. Academic tasks are refined and planned using student work.

Impact

Curricula development ensures alignment to the Common Core and an integration of the instructional shifts and promotes college and career readiness for all learners. All learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula and are engaged in curricula that promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The leadership and the staff have made an effort to ensure that the school curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and content standards. Curriculum maps and units of study have been developed by teachers who participated in curriculum development after school for both English language arts (ELA) and math. Common planning time is provided for the staff to use the Common Core aligned resources from Go Math, Engage NY Math Modules, Ready Gen, and Teachers College selected Writing Units of Study to ensure integration of the instructional shifts in all units of study in all subjects and grades.
- Curricula maps and units of study in all content areas integrate the Common Core State Standards and the instructional shifts. For example, a fourth grade science unit on food chain and food webs evidenced the big ideas of the unit, domain specific vocabulary, assessment and specific questions aligned to the depth of knowledge (DOK) framework. A 5th grade curriculum map evidenced all subject areas and time frames for each unit of studies in the school effort to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for the students.
- Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using students' work. For example, after a review of the data for an end of unit in math, teacher teams decided to revise lesson 9 in the Go Math curriculum to incorporate strategies for emergent bilingual students and students with disabilities. Teachers paired students to work together first on problem solving and then had student work independently. Additionally, students were given choices to use the online computer programs such as Think Central and Success Maker to practice with skill-based lessons on the content prior to engaging in problem solving.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the Common Core, and student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation across most classrooms visited.

Impact

As a result, students are actively engaged in their learning. However, opportunities for extended learning and demonstration of high level student thinking, participation, and ownership, are not yet consistent across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- Students have opportunities to engage in rich structured conversations during whole group and small group instruction. Students use questions, prompts and protocols to engage in discussions. The principal notes that the leadership incorporates the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Learning and the Common Core instructional shifts into teacher practice by utilizing this framework for all formal and informal observations, professional conversations, and designating an instructional focus that is directly aligned to component 3d (Assessment in Instruction and Feedback to Students). These structures however, were not yet consistent in the vast majority of classrooms lessening the impact of quality teaching practices across grades and subjects.
- In classrooms visited, teaching practices evidenced multiple entry points into the curricula to ensure that all students are provided with scaffolds, questioning and the use of strategic use of native language instructions to engage all students with challenging tasks. Classrooms visited evidenced word wall with illustrations and pictures, prompts for accountable talk to support students in making their thinking visible, use of cognates, and the use of technology programs such as Think Central and Success Maker to accommodate the individual learning needs of all students.
- In some classrooms, students had opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks on their own, in pairs, or in groups, to build high critical thinking, participation and high level work products. In a grade 3 reading class, students were asked to determine the theme of the text *Brave Girl* by paying attention to the character's actions after a close read of the book. Students were given two sentence starters to use when sharing with partners and in groups. In addition, to support students with this task, they were provided with relevant vocabulary words to address the topic in discussions with partners and in groups and they were given graphic organizers for partner work. The activity was organized and provided cognitive challenge for the students to derive the learning from the task, the discussion and the reflection.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula to determine student progress towards goals across grades and content areas and the results are used to make adjustments and revisions to the curricula and instruction.

Impact

Assessment practices provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding academic achievement and consistently inform adjustments to curricula and teaching practice.

Supporting Evidence

- As stated by the leadership and teacher teams, across classrooms, teachers use research-based and Common Core aligned assessments, such as the NY State ELA and Math tests, performance-based assessments, Fountas and Pinnell running records, HOT questions, discussions, rubrics, check lists, exit slips, and number talks to ensure alignment to the curricula and to determine mastery of the Common Core. Additionally, teachers have developed and adjusted performance tasks aligned to the Common Core and to the curricula utilizing resources such as Engage NY, Go Math, Ready Gen, Common Core Learning Standards, and Teachers College. For example, the curriculum maps were adjusted in math after a revision of the Engage NY math calendar leading to a reduction of units in the curriculum maps for math. This afforded teachers opportunities to go deeper with the content for the grade and ensure that the standards tested in the upper grades were taught prior to the state exams.
- The school uses common assessments and rubrics aligned to the Common Core to determine progress towards curricula goals and provide feedback to students regarding their academic achievement. A review of portfolios during classroom visitation and conversation with students showed evidence of the use of rubrics and feedback given to students to advance their learning. Furthermore, students were able to articulate the purpose of the rubrics and checklists and they were able to explain the written reflections on work that they wrote based on the feedback given by teachers. For example, a review of a fourth grade student showed a reflection sheet given by the teacher for the student to self-assess his writing work. The work evidenced one thing that the student wanted to improve upon and one thing that the student found difficult. The student wrote: "The next step that I will like to improve is add more details and get better at spelling" and "What I found difficult about this writing piece is the second question. It was confusing".
- Teachers meet in teams on a weekly basis during inquiry time and in grade common planning time to make adjustments and revisions to the curriculum maps, units of study and lessons based on the analysis of student work, data results and expectations of the curricula. Assessments data is used to target students for small group instruction, intervention, conferring and individualized support. For example, during the teacher interview and the meeting with the leadership, teachers reported that a math unit was revised after an analysis of student work in writing revealed that students were struggling with focus on one moment in their narrative piece. Teachers decided to readjust the unit by using graphic organizers to support students in their writing development.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and support them towards success in meeting the expectations. Families are provided with information about expectations for their children, and are supported in learning how to help their children succeed in meeting the expectations.

Impact

The school has established a culture of shared expectations for learning that results in all stakeholders, including families, working collaboratively to ensure all students meet high expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff through daily supervisory visits and actionable feedback given to all staff using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The administrative team is involved in all professional development activities on a weekly and monthly basis to support teachers in shared understanding of the school's expectations for teaching and learning. Weekly professional development activities focus on the school-wide emphasis for the year, which are differentiated instruction and supports and extensions, actionable feedback to students, explicit modeling, and higher-order thinking, rigor, and engagement. The principal holds the staff accountable for these expectations by collecting lesson plans and providing feedback when recommendations are not visible in daily instruction.
- School leaders provide the staff with a handbook which delineates the expectations for teaching and learning at the school. These expectations are in direct alignment with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Learning and the NYC DOE Instructional Expectations. The handbook includes descriptions of exemplary classrooms and the evidence that the leadership expects from each classroom in terms of environment. Additionally, the handbook includes the application of universal design for learning (UDL) in order to ensure that all students have access to rigorous and engaging curricula. Lesson plans collected during classroom visitation and shared by the leadership evidenced the expectations for daily instruction and include teaching points, strategies for active engagement, guided, independent and whole group work, and differentiated work to provide multiple entry points into the lesson.
- Parents reported that the school consistently communicates with them through phone calls, texts, e-mails and Skedula from Datacatation, an online system that tracks students' assignments and grades. Additionally, the school sends out monthly calendars of upcoming events of the school. They provide workshops on topics including preparing for and applying to middle schools. These workshops and meetings are opportunities for the school to share ways parents can support their children and to gain feedback from parents on what supports they feel are still needed from the school.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry and professional collaborations to revise and adjust the curricula. Leadership structures give opportunities for teachers to play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and better professional collaborations. Teachers’ participation in key decision making centered on curricula and instruction facilitates student engagement and students’ success.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly to plan curriculum, to share strategies learned in staff development and workshops, and to look at student work using a school protocol for inquiry. Teacher’s turn-key information from workshops such as focusing on developing instructional practices aligned to Danielson’s Framework for Teaching and looking at student work to support students in meeting the expectations set in the Common Core.
- The fourth grade teacher team, for example, uses the DOE looking at student work protocol to analyze student work and to identify strengths and gaps. Teachers also discuss instructional strategies and resources for teaching writing to improve their collaborative planning of the next writing unit.
- Meetings with teachers revealed that they contribute to the school’s instructional decisions. For example, teacher teams normed and graded the MOSL assessments. In common planning teacher team and inquiry team, they use the data analysis results to make instructional decisions that will be consistently implemented in each grade. The writing curriculum was revised to ensure that all lessons provide multiple entry points for diverse learners, such as prioritizing learning targets, developing student-friendly Common Core aligned rubrics, pacing, and sequencing lessons to scaffold and reach the targets of students meeting the demands of the grade performance-based assessments and the daily classroom academic expectations. This leadership structure ensures that teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning and school-wide goals.