

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Middle School for Art and Philosophy

Middle School 588

**1084 Lenox Road
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Andrew Buck

Dates of review: March 24 - 25, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle School for Art and Philosophy is a middle school with 346 students from grade six through grade 8. The school population comprises 87% Black, 7% Hispanic, 3% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

At the end of this third school year, the school has efficient and well-established data gathering systems in place to enable the school and families to have a constant up-to-date picture of students' performance across all subjects. Content area teachers share and examine student performance data alongside administrators. Teacher teams ensure a comprehensive analysis of diagnostic and formative data to determine individual student needs. Item analyses and tailored assessments result in interventions and enrichment programs during and after school. Individual teachers know their students well. Thereby, adjustments to curriculum and instruction support increased levels of proficiency. In contrast, awareness of patterns and trends in sub-group performance does not translate into causal analysis to determine relevant measures of support for improved outcomes by gender and among English language learners. Conferences between students and teachers about academic progress regularly take place in all content areas. Accordingly, students use teacher, peer, and self-evaluations to set interim goals and improve their performance over time. Students exude confidence in their achievements. One student described the school as "the climb to success". The arts and practice of philosophy for children are central themes of the school. The Urban Arts Programs and BRIC/Rotunda Gallery partnerships enhance the school curriculum. Life connections and residencies embedded into instruction create concrete learning experiences that scaffold abstract thinking; for example, every lesson presents an essential question to promote ongoing discussion and self-reflection. Learning walks, formal observations, intervisitations, and independent professional growth plans appropriately link to school-wide instructional goals. Formalized professional development addresses the implementation of differentiated planning, but the application in classrooms does not yet accommodate different learning styles, thus limiting student capacity.

Parents and teachers feel that the school "needs an effective system for addressing student behavior and small infractions". The absence of uniformed norms and explicit expectations to regulate student behavior adversely affects school climate, resulting in interruptions to both student and adult work. The operational team meets weekly to address discipline measures and to mediate ongoing incidents. However, the entire school community is not yet fully involved in the decision-making process to increase understanding of, and commitment to improved student outcomes in this area.

The principal has devised organizational structures to support clear, achievable and relevant academic goals. However, the involvement of all stakeholders in planning for school improvement is not yet sufficiently strong to consistently impact on student achievement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school utilizes a collaborative approach across grades to set student improvement goals, based on benchmark data, to raise student achievement.
 - All constituents know that the accelerated instructional goal is 15-20 scale score points in English language arts and math, for all students across all grades. As a result, teacher teams use diagnostic and formative data effectively as guideposts for planning lessons and when designing benchmark assessments to create interim student goals.
 - School leaders and support staff work in tandem to engage students in school life. As a result, parent attendance at leadership team and parent association meetings has increased, providing greater opportunities for parental involvement at school planning level.
- The curriculum offers interesting and stimulating experiences that engage students in critical thinking, reflection, and ownership of learning.
 - Experiential learning experiences immerse students in standards based activities to promote self-assessment and self-monitoring. The development of visual and performing arts programs, and the infusion of Philosophy for Children continuously shape creative thinking and extend higher order skills.
 - Uniform delivery of instruction in a workshop model ensures that students are engaged in finely tailored lessons that integrate essential questions, theme related activities, and relevant content. Students enthusiastically delve into their studies. For example, small group tasks and math and science Regents level classes are designed to connect to the needs of struggling and high achieving learners.
- Through effective use of a wide range of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an ongoing understanding of the performance and progress of individuals, by class and by subject, to facilitate improved student outcomes.
 - The school collects and uses data from external sources and from its own assessments. This enables school leaders to set the groundwork for curricular and instructional decisions. For example, based on the analysis of grade six English language arts scores, all grade six students now receive fourteen periods of literacy instruction per week.
 - The consistent collection of class-based data assists teachers in identifying students' individual needs. The scantron system provides teachers with immediate access to formative assessment results. Teachers regularly examine and analyze updated item skills to refine the information that they use in planning lessons. This work translates into flexible grouping across content areas.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring teaching and learning, with a clear focus on improving instructional practices.

- School leaders utilize learning walks, formal and informal observations, mentoring, coaching and class data to support strategic improvement of instructional techniques. The monitoring of daily planning and delivery of lessons engenders differentiated professional development sessions to target professional goals and personal growth. In addition, strategically matched mentors work with new teachers and teachers new to urban settings to promote the honing of skill sets in agreed areas of need.
- Teacher teams meet regularly to examine student work, to plan and revise curriculum, and to share best pedagogical thinking in a desire to improve learning outcomes.
 - The inquiry and department-level teacher teams meet weekly or bi-weekly to study student work, to discuss lessons taught, and to remedy curricular concerns. Collegial conversations enable teachers to examine and interrogate data from multiple perspectives. This practice empowers teachers to design lessons, share strategies, and provide critical friend feedback for lesson refinement.
 - As a basis for reflection on effective practices, inquiry teams utilize an action research model that involves documenting intervention strategies and assessing student short-term learning. Links between implementing instruction, effective use of teacher and student resources, and collaborative analysis of student work result in increased levels of proficiency in core subjects.
- Leaders and faculty regularly evaluate the effectiveness of organizational decisions and make necessary adjustments, which lead to individualized student instructional support to deepen or accelerate learning.
 - Weekly department team meetings further school leaders' and teachers' use of data to drive school-wide decisions. Item analysis, particularly in English language arts and math, provides information about gaps in student learning. This regular monitoring of academic performance enables suitably high goals to be set for accelerated teacher and student learning.
 - Quarterly adjustments to flexible grouping leads to benchmarks and interim instructional support for students with the greatest need. Regular monitoring and evaluation of what works well results in teachers receiving next-step support to either maintain or improve their monitoring of student progress.

What the school needs to improve

- Establish a supportive environment with consistent high expectations for academic and social behavior that are clearly reinforced by school leaders, students, staff, and parents.
 - Adults state that the current behavior management program does not adequately address positive or negative student behavior. As a result, high rates of recidivistic behaviors and enduring infractions disrupt teaching and learning. One teacher commented, "I spend 95% of class time on discipline and 5% on teaching."

- Full implementation of the incentive program depends solely on school funds. Consequently, incentives that serve as motivation for students to practice good behaviors are not always available. In addition, the school does not have established advisories in place to help students understand and deal with rules and consequences.
- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction, based on data, so that all lesson planning reflects tasks that accommodate different learning styles.
 - Teachers across grades and content areas utilize tiered grouping based on skill-specific areas of need. Nevertheless, some lessons lack understanding of differentiated approaches that take into account students' preferred learning styles. Therefore, although level of content may differ, the tasks are the same.
 - The majority of teachers deliver whole-group engagements, in a small group mode. Thus, lessons do not provide varied and multiple entry points to maximize and extend student thinking. Consequently, lessons lack consistency in promoting rigor and challenge.
- Deepen examination of summative and formative data to explore the relevant trends and patterns that affect performance among sub-groups.
 - Teams of teachers are in the early stages of investigating inherent learning trends and gaps among sub-groups. Therefore, data analysis does not examine the causes of shifts in student performance. As such, teachers are not fully aware of the precise next steps required for school-wide improvement. For example, the use of ARIS to aggregate grade level data does not automatically lead to supports to address the specific learning needs of the growing English language learner population across the school. Therefore, not all students within this sub-group benefit from strategic use of data that is best suited to meet their needs.
- Extend transparency, collaborations, and shared decision-making to provide more opportunities for faculty to share key insights and best practices, that are focused on improving student outcomes and professional growth.
 - The school empowers teachers with ownership of the curriculum to improve student outcomes. Teachers review student information, engage in inquiry, and adapt and revise curriculum maps. However, teachers lack opportunities for inclusive school-wide conversations, and this hinders collaborative decision-making for effective implementation of professional initiatives and programs. Due to the lack of an instructional cabinet, the school has few leadership entry points for teachers. Limited teacher participation, in matters other than curriculum, has an adverse impact on enduring capacity building within the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Middle School for Art and Philosophy	△	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>		Δ	➤	✓	+		
3.1	Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X			
3.2	Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X			
3.3	Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X			
3.4	Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>		Δ	➤	✓	+		
4.1	Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X			
4.2	Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X			
4.3	Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X			
4.4	Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>		Δ	➤	✓	+		
5.1	Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X			
5.2	Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X			
5.3	Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X			
5.4	Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed