



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Division of Performance and Accountability
2010-2011**

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Middle School of the Arts

Middle School 587

**790 East New York Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Susan Hobson-Ransom

**Dates of review: January 5 - 6, 2011
Lead Reviewer: Rhonda Hurdle-Taylor**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle School of the Arts is a middle school with 339 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 93% Black, 6% Hispanic, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 89.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers collaborate frequently to examine student work, plan together, and share best practices, through a desire to improve student outcomes.
 - Teachers welcome opportunities to plan together with their colleagues in order to strengthen their instructional practices. Teachers optimize their weekly team meetings by creating units of study, examining student work samples, and reviewing student attendance and test data. This process allows teachers to adjust their plans and try new instructional approaches that are leading to improved student performance.
 - Teacher leaders participate on the School Leadership Team, facilitate inquiry work, conduct professional development, lead curriculum development teams, and sit on the principal's extended cabinet. They also make decisions around the purchasing of grade appropriate instructional software that is helping students to improve their academics.
- Effective student support services and collaborations provide students with opportunities to grow academically and socially.
 - The school's guidance counselor and dean use behavior intervention protocols, as well as group and individual counseling sessions, to effectively deal with the social and emotional needs of students. The parent coordinator and other support staff also receive training on methods to reduce bullying and conflict resolution issues. As a result, there is a reduction in student behavioral problems, student suspensions, online occurrence reporting, and parent calls to 311.
 - The school employs the services of a community-based organization, to augment their performing arts theme. This partnership enhances student learning by offering meaningful experiences in ballet, modern and African dance, and is helping the school to attain its goal of providing students with an unparalleled arts program. Parents now say that they feel more confident about their children's future in dancing.
- Leaders establish clear systems to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development supports and organizational decisions that affect learning.
 - The teacher center facilitator leads inquiry teamwork, and provides the principal and assistant principal with feedback and minutes from inquiry team meetings in order to ensure coherence across the school. This information is used during cabinet meetings to regularly assess the work of teacher teams. School leaders support the work of teacher teams by providing additional professional resources and opportunities to attend professional development outside of the school.
 - As part of the formal observation process, administrators review student performance and examine teacher progress towards meeting their professional goals. As a result, administrators work with teachers to revise their goals, assign teachers with specific strategies to improve their practice, provide buddy teachers, and set up teacher inter-visitations.

- Students demonstrate good levels of engagement in well-matched lessons, good behavior, and enthusiasm for learning to reach their potential.
 - Classroom visits, across all grades, reflect that teachers focus on vocabulary in all content areas through highly differentiated academic tasks related to content-specific terminology. This allows all students to become familiar with the words using differentiated applications.
 - Small-group instruction exists in all content areas and includes tasks that support struggling students and challenge high achieving scholars. Students eagerly participate in hands-on activities. As a result, students are producing and sharing high quality work.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
 - Teachers' programming enables them to engage in weekly grade-level and department common planning. Consequently, teacher teams review and discuss individual student work in math and English language arts, assess school-wide data, and conference around targeted students, allowing for the identification of and development of plans to address students' learning needs.
 - On-going review of students' test results shows that English language learners are experiencing severe limitations in the development of their literacy and math skills, which directly affects their academic performance. As a result, the principal hired a part-time English as a second language teacher to provide direct services to support these students. Preliminary analysis from 'Instructionally Targeted Assessments', teacher tests, and running records, indicates that student performance is already improving.
- The school has established effective systems for monitoring and supporting teacher practice with a clear focus on improving instructional practices.
 - The principal and assistant principal conduct frequent formal observations, and daily walk-throughs, that yield data about teacher and student needs. Immediate feedback to staff provides non-negotiable methods to improve their pedagogy. As a result, lesson plans include differentiated strategies, critical thinking activities, and rigorous instructional tasks.
 - The school's professional development team provides tiered professional development based on the results from one-on-one conversations with teachers, data from classroom observations, and teacher surveys. The lead teacher assigned to the in-house teacher center provides coaching to struggling teachers in order to enhance the coherence of already established teaching practices across the school. As a result, teachers execute classroom practices more suited to the needs of their students.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop further coherence and alignment in the school's curriculum with State standards to ensure that all students make progress in their learning.

- The school designs curriculum maps that include content area standards and key strands in each of the major content areas. Strategies for flexible grouping and differentiated instruction are interwoven in these curriculum maps. However, the incorporation of standards in lessons is not as evident in grade 6.
- The curriculum provides a comprehensive learning experience inclusive of project-based learning work products across subject areas. Teachers provide opportunities for students to work together to create projects that require them to employ problem solving skills. However, this is not as evident in grade 6 classes, thus leading to more routine work products.
- Extend data gathering and analysis practices to all core subjects to provide a complete picture of students' progress across all aspects of the school.
 - Teachers collect and organize data from running records, Acuity, ARIS, and Instructionally Targeted Assessments to make appropriate classroom level decisions in math and English language arts. In addition, students' participation in Renzulli and Brain Pop to improve their skills provide teachers with data that is used to determine those areas in which students need support. At present, however, this practice is not evident across all content areas.
 - Although teacher teams work cohesively looking at student work products in order to identify students' strengths and deficiencies, this work has not yet yielded sufficient data to create a clear picture relative to students' individual needs. This limits teachers' ability to employ flexible grouping strategies across classrooms based on student needs.
- Create a system to enable faculty and administrators to organize student data and track trends in student performance.
 - Administrators and teacher teams analyze student test scores, using data from in-house assessments, ARIS and Acuity, to identify patterns and compare past and present performance levels. However, there is no structured system to document cumulative assessment data to evaluate student performance trends.
 - Classroom teachers are beginning to collect and arrange student assessment data in binders and use the information to group students for instruction. However, there is little evidence that this information is sufficiently analyzed to identify students for conferencing and develop flexible groups.
- Build on the school's goal setting to extend the analysis of assessment data to inform and set differentiated learning goals for struggling students.
 - Teachers and teams use a variety of data to identify those students in need of academic intervention. However, teachers do not sufficiently support special education and targeted students in setting specific goals. Likewise, teacher teams do not suitably use data to set interim learning goals for targeted students. As a result, students' growth is not sufficiently tracked towards reaching long-term goals.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Middle School of the Arts	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed