

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Middle School for Art and Philosophy

K588

**1084 Lenox Road
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Andrew Buck

Dates of review: February 14 - 15, 2011

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 364 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 89% Black, 9% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 91%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Organizational decisions regarding resources and teacher assignments increase academic support promoting positive student outcomes.
 - The school has established a computer lab and instituted a dedicated teacher position resulting in targeted reading and math support in order to improve performance outcomes for struggling learners. As such, students performing below grade level expectations make use of Achieve 3000 and Acuity programs to advance proficiency.
 - In an effort to buttress school improvement, the principal invests in coaching positions. As a result, a newly funded data specialist position coupled with support from the network literacy coach ensures English language arts teachers receive a "lion share of support". Thus, teachers work in tandem to promote achievement among cohorts of students in order to meet annual yearly progress targets.
- School leaders and faculty analyze state and periodic assessments to understand trends around learning needs, which leads to concentrated support for targeted students.
 - School leaders and faculty give attention to state, school, and class level data to create common understandings of where subgroups of students are in relation to performance standards. In turn, analysis of NYSESLAT data energizes critical English as a Second Language instruction. This deliberate focus on raising the proficiency levels of English language learners generates multiple opportunities for students to practice language acquisition skills.
- School expectations and collaborations have resulted in significant improvement in classroom tone and climate.
 - A student reported, "The school is becoming better at respect". Similarly, teachers feel better supported by the principal. One teacher told the reviewer that morale has improved. Because of consensus building, teachers at each grade level devised a conduct and discipline plan. Consequently, student removals lead to fewer classroom interruptions and contribute to environments conducive to learning.
 - Parents expressed satisfaction with the guidance counselor and social worker because "they know how to talk to children". In addition, the majority of students interviewed eagerly shared the name of one adult to whom they go for help or counsel. Hence, school-based support systems encourage students to achieve academically, attend school regularly, and conduct themselves appropriately.
- The school provides individualized professional development and support for teachers to learn effective teaching methods, and encourages them to self-evaluate and revise instructional approaches as it relates to learning for all students.
 - The school's professional plan lists a variety of internal opportunities for teachers to hone their craft and sharpen teaching skills. As such, alignment of teacher

- defined professional goals with school-wide instructional goals lead to frequent targeted support from CITE English language arts and math consultants, the network instructional support team, and an e-Chalk technology staff developer. As a result, teachers receive classroom-based support to heighten understanding of Common Core Standards, which fosters traction in student achievement.
- The structure of an instructional cabinet, comprised of a teacher leader from each grade, undergirds weekly grade level meetings whereby content area teachers collaborate to share their assessment of student performance. This study of student work and work habits translates into problem solving particular issues that hamper student learning. For example, grade 8 content area teachers work diligently to personalize learning plans so that all understand learning needs of a target group of students. One teacher described the benefits of this professional activity as "help to refocus the way I plan lessons".
 - The school's internal partnerships support students in continual learning as related to individual personal growth and healthy development.
 - Partnerships with Common Sense Media and its grant funded leadership program fortify the practical knowledge and understandings of issues encountered by students. Therefore, nurturance and development of all children are widely supported by teachers who know students well.
 - In addition to extended academic learning opportunities, the Sport and Arts afterschool program coupled with Urban Arts and Alloy, inc. partnerships entice student interest as well as sharpen their artistic talents. Recreation, wearable art classes, theatre club, chorus, and a mentoring program serve as springboards for high levels of student participation. Moreover, these internal partnerships influence positive youth development and lead to productive academic attitudes as evidence by interviews with students.

What the school needs to improve

- Sharpen formal and informal observation systems in order to further professional expertise and improve teaching practices across the school.
 - School leaders use formal observations, class visits, and individual teacher conferences to evaluate professional strengths and areas for growth. However, regular feedback to ensure improved teaching is not consistent across grades nor is it always aligned with benchmark plans. As such, next step recommendations that address developmental, pedagogical, and content knowledge challenges do not influence immediate attention suited to improve instruction. Consequently, low teacher responses on the Learning Environment Survey point out that the 'quality of teaching is not a high priority at the school'.
- Deepen teacher planning to incorporate engaging questions that elicit higher order skills and rigorous tasks so that appropriate challenge and engagement extend the learning of diverse groups of students.
 - The school uses curriculum maps in English language arts and subject area scope and sequence pacing calendars to plan and implement standards-based lessons. However, the school's work on curriculum mapping is evolving. For example, the alignment and rigor of content skills, assessment, and essential

questions vary across grades and subjects. In addition, plans do not reflect the specific needs of the school's subgroups. As a result, curriculum maps and academic tasks do not consistently incorporate rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills for a variety of learners in order to close gaps in learning ensuring that all students succeed.

- Improve the delivery of differentiation of classroom learning activities to provide sufficient challenge aligned to student achievement levels in order to meet the individual needs of all students.
 - Teaching practices align with the school's belief that differentiated approaches to instruction meet the needs of students. In most classes, teachers plan academic tasks for three groups according to performance levels. However, instructional strategies and academic tasks, particularly for students in the bottom third and English language learners in general education settings, do not always offer strategically differentiated access to knowledge. For example, student engagements require they complete less of the same activity or they engage in rotating activities. As a result, students demonstrate uneven levels of engagement in lessons and some lessons do not fully challenge students or maximize their full potential thereby limiting accelerated learning.
- Develop teacher's use of assessments to adjust pedagogy across classrooms so that information culled better serves the needs of students.
 - Teachers use English language arts, math, and NYSESLAT summative assessment results; English language arts and math item analysis data; Acuity predictive data; and baseline data to identify student performance levels. Nevertheless, teachers do not typically integrate formative assessment data into their daily practice. For example, entire class textbook assignments, graphic organizers devoid of specific prompts, or tasks not well matched to students areas of challenge thwart progress. The lack of interim assessment driven work limits activities designed to meet the special needs of individual students and subgroups. As a result, instructional strategies and academic tasks do not sufficiently align with the needs of all students in order to ensure short and long-term success.
- Develop a clear structure and set of tools to track progress of interim and long-term goals in order to evaluate and revise strategies toward increased student outcomes.
 - Although the school has identified the need to increase the proficiency levels of special education students, English language learners, and students in the bottom third of its population, they lack a clear system for tracking interim progress toward long-term goals. Therefore, without specific structures to monitor effectiveness and evaluate progress, the school does not make regular adjustments to plans in support of hastened improvement. Consequently, because of limited individual student goal setting by teachers, school leaders cannot be certain that individual and groups of students are on track to meeting learning targets.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Middle School for Art and Philosophy	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