

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Marine Park**

**Middle School 278**

**1925 Stuart Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11229**

**Principal: Debra Garofalo**

**Dates of review: November 8-9, 2011**

**Lead Reviewer: Linda Waite**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Marine Park is a middle school with 990 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 49% Black, 16% Hispanic, 6% Asian and 29% White students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal utilizes the budget and makes informed organizational decisions to support student and adult learning. (1.3)
  - From the onset of the school year, the principal effectively structures student-teacher time to maximize learning by systematically scheduling two common planning periods for every teacher into his/her instructional programs. In addition, school leaders and faculty collaborated to utilize a school-based option providing extended time for students to learn and an additional 50-minute period for teacher teams to meet and plan tasks on and across grade levels, share best practices, and revise and implement instructional strategies. The principal decreased the workload of a math teacher by one period so she can serve as a team leader/coach. As a result, teachers feel well supported by the principal, assistant principals, and their colleagues; they also report a higher level of satisfaction with the professional development they receive as noted on the Learning Environment Survey. Moreover, students are benefitting from the revision of instructional practices and the additional time on task they receive as evidenced by the median growth percentile for the lowest third, and by exemplary gains earned for their integrated collaborative team teaching and self-contained students in English language arts, as noted on the most recent Progress Report. The principal's decision to return a cluster teacher back to the classroom, hire a licensed special education/technology teacher, and offer an additional 40-minute period of individualized literacy through computer-based literacy programs along with a period of English language arts to all "at risk" students, aligns to school-wide goals and serves to support and improve literacy skills. A review of monthly computer generated data charts reveal that a majority of targeted students are making continuous progress, thus, narrowing the achievement gap.
- The school provides a safe, inclusive environment that successfully supports students' achievement. (1.4)
  - Administrators meet and greet students in the morning as they enter the building and again in the cafeteria during lunch periods, thus students' feel welcomed. The assignment of grade level assistant principals, counselors and deans, who loop-up with students, assures that students are well known. The guidance staff conducts group and individual counseling sessions, while the substance abuse and prevention specialist conducts in class lessons on various topics including adolescent issues, leading to students articulating that they feel comfortable seeking guidance and academic intervention services when needed. Hence, a majority of students is passing core subjects as per the Progress Report and school scholarship reports, and suspensions are down as per the Occurrence Report. The school's belief that students need to be active participants in the teaching-learning process promotes teachers in the engagement of students to review and discuss their assessment results and develop their own academic and personal goals. Students also take on various roles within their learning groups by constructing questions referencing Webb's Depth of Knowledge Question Charts and utilizing rubrics to reflect and improve their work and that of their classmates. Consequently, students are

accountable for their learning, are able to discuss their strengths, weaknesses, and next steps, leading to improved performance.

- The school communicates high expectations to staff, students and parents to promote achievement and prepare students for post secondary readiness.(3.4)
  - The distribution and review of the Code of Discipline, attendance/ academic requirements, course outlines, contracts and a school-wide grading policy enables students to understand the relationship between attendance, hard work, and success. Consequently, the attendance rate is at 94.4%, and students have a greater high school course-passing rate (35.6%) as compared to their peer schools (32.2%) and the City (22.6%). High-level student work on display throughout the school serves as exemplars, and motivates students to achieve. Additionally, students are attaining the academic, behavioral, and social skills necessary to be recognized as Student of the Month and members of Arista/Archon, all of which are readying students for success in high school and beyond. The principal utilizes faculty conferences and grade and team meetings to convey clear behavioral and professional expectations. As a result, teacher attendance is improved, routines established, data informs instruction, and teachers are holding themselves accountable for student learning.
- The school's experienced support staff and partnerships with outside agencies effectively provide assistance that lead to students' personal, emotional, and academic growth.(4.4)
  - The pupil personnel committee that meets on a regular basis case conferences referred students to gain insight into their behavioral and academic issues. As a result, students receive appropriate interventions services while teachers and parents obtain strategies necessary to address the students' needs in class and at home. Additionally, the substance abuse prevention specialist conducts lessons that allow students to make informed decisions regarding adolescent issues. The guidance counselor and parent coordinator organize workshops for students and parents on the high school application process, which prepares them for the next phase of their education. Accordingly, the Learning Environment Survey indicates high scores by both parents and teachers, indicating they are able to get the help necessary to address students' behavioral and learning needs. There are fewer referrals for academic or behavioral reasons, and students express that there are programs and people in the school to help them resolve issues and prepare them for the transition to the next level in their education.
  - Partnerships with Arts Achieve, Donors Choose, and Lincoln Center support the school's Performing Arts Programs by expanding students' experiential and cultural background, and providing real life learning opportunities to support their personal interests and future career goals. Consequently, students perform at Lincoln Center, participate in nationally recognized competitions, and receive awards and recognition for their talent and instrumental performances.
- Professional collaboration is a priority and faculty benefit from the opportunity to share and develop strengths as individuals and members of the teaching community. (4.2)
  - One hundred percent of the faculty engages in inquiry work with a focus on improving student-learning outcomes. Leaders effectively analyze the

backgrounds and strengths of teachers to carefully select members for each team so that members effectively analyze data and look at student work student from various perspectives, and share and implement instructional practices including highlighting clue words, and using graphic organizers. Additionally, teachers are viewing bundles of lessons, making adjustments, and creating rubrics to maximize learning as noted by improvements in class work, homework, results on quarterly exams, and writing and math assignments.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Develop rigorous curricula and tasks that promote students' higher level thinking and problem solving skills for all students.(1.1)
  - In response to the previous Quality Review, the school is now utilizing curriculum maps that align to Common Core Learning Standards in English Language Arts and math. However, curriculum maps do not include assessments, testing accommodations, or the integration of technology. Additionally, academic tasks that emphasize rigor and higher order thinking skills are not consistently crafted across grades and subject areas. Consequently, English language learners are not making significant exemplary gains and the school is not narrowing the achievement gap as compared to their English proficient peers. Additionally, the written social studies curriculum for grade 7 and 8 is not being adhered to nor being taught to grade 7 and 8 special education students in a bridge class. As a result, unlike their general education peers who receive Global Studies and American History respectively, students in the bridge class are not gaining the appropriate content knowledge and skills necessary to achieve academically.
- Deepen the level of differentiated instruction so that all lessons offer suitable challenges that foster students' learning and achievement. ( 1.2)
  - As a school community, administrators, and faculty members, articulate the belief that data drives instruction, instruction needs to be differentiated, and students must be actively engaged in their learning. To this end, the school utilizes the workshop model approach. While teachers use data to form learning groups and differentiate activities, the tiered assignments are not consistently challenging. A group of English language learners utilizing a literacy program to individually access leveled social studies vocabulary are given the task of writing the word and definition five times and using each word in a sentence. Accordingly, these students are not performing as well as their English proficient counterparts on State English language arts exams. Each classroom clearly displays Webb's Depth of Knowledge wheel as a reminder to teachers to focus on asking Level 3 and 4 questions to actively engage students in high-level discussion. Although some teachers ask thought provoking questions and have students substantiate responses with details from the text this is not yet an embedded practice. Therefore, not all students are benefitting from rich classroom conversations or developing critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary to foster academic achievement.
- Monitor that teachers are analyzing and using on-going assessment data to identify and meet the learning needs of students. (2.2)
  - Teachers and teams are utilizing quarterly exams and periodic assessments to review strands and identify students' performance both on a class and on

individual student level. However, as data is not disaggregated for sub-groups of students, there is limited focus on their needs, thus limiting the achievement of relevant groups of students. While many teachers use on-going assessments strategies such as surveys, raised hands, and summary questions to determine mastery, it is not yet an embedded practice. As a result, some teachers miss understanding the performance and progress made by students.

- Ensure that school leaders conduct short frequent cycles of observations that provide clearly articulated next steps for adult professional growth and student learning. (4.1)
  - Presently, the principal and assistant principals utilize a research-based framework and rubric to conduct short frequent cycles of observations. While school leaders provide immediate written feedback, utilizing a checklist of areas met and not met as well as next steps, recommendations are not clearly communicated. Next steps that include “assess student learning,” or “to scaffold the use of higher level questions,” lacks pertinent information on how to improve instructional practice, thus impeding adult professional growth and limiting student performance and progress. Frequent short cycles of observations coupled with formal observations are used to plan professional develop activities such as informal inter-visitations, lunch and learns, and/or individual and small group mentoring to meet the individual needs of teachers. However, the administration and peer leaders are in the beginning stages of utilizing observations, teacher self-reflection, and feedback to structure a comprehensive school-wide and differentiated professional plan supported at the network level to meet teacher needs and achieve long-term goals necessary to increase student achievement and move the school forward.
- Develop a structure for evaluating curriculum, instructional, and organizational decisions to increase coherence of practice and policy across the school. (5.1)
  - Grade level teacher teams led by team leaders and assisted by assistant principals are responsible for reviewing and adjusting curricula, and sharing decisions with other grade level teams on an as needed basis. However, the structure does not evaluate the effectiveness of curricular decisions, as a result the level of rigor and complexity of tasks is not always addressed sufficiently, which ultimately impacts student learning.
  - Although the evaluation of instructional and organizational decisions takes place at the end of each term, this is not sufficiently comprehensive for all programs. When asked to discuss the efficacy of the computer-based literacy program for at risk students, school leaders were unable to respond. As a result, adjustments and decisions for all programs are not yet suitably specific school-wide.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Marine Park</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

**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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			<b>X</b>	

**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>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
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?			<b>X</b>	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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