

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Middle School 381

**1599 EAST 22 STREET
BROOKLYN
NY 11210**

Principal: MARY HARRINGTON

**Dates of review: May 22-23, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Nadya Awadallah**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle School 381 is a middle school with 437 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 63% Black, 17% Hispanic, 10% White, 9% Asian students and 1% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 95.3%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teacher pedagogy support strong student engagement and differentiation, which has produced meaningful student work products, across the grades, in literacy and math. (1.2)
 - o There is a school wide philosophy that students learn best based on creative planning supported by teacher collaboration that integrates current learning practices such as problem solving techniques and strong analysis of content in collaboration with students' needs. Specifically, teaching strategies related to high level questions and engaging students in meaningful peer discussions is apparent in classrooms. This is represented in the literacy and math programs which was adjusted to meet the accelerated needs of 8th graders resulting in accelerated classes which provide them with opportunities to earn high school credit in Mathematics and Spanish proficiency.
 - o Teachers use assessment data to plan lessons and develop differentiated learning activities. Students explain how assignments provide challenge and how performance tasks that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) which prepare students for post-secondary readiness skills. As an outgrowth of this work, grade 8 students feel prepared for high school based on their results of Acuity, ARIS, and classroom data which highlights their English Language Arts (ELA) progress on a regular basis.
- The school develops and analyzes a variety of assessments, resulting in grade level discussions which yield adjustments of instructional decisions at the team and classroom level. (2.2)
 - o Teacher teams collaborate to use data from ATS, Acuity, ARIS and other data tools to gain a better understanding of student progress over time. Teachers are able to articulate coherent reasons for their assessment choices. Teacher teams create common, grade-wide, curriculum aligned assessments that are customized to address data defined student and sub-group needs. Based on interim assessments results from ARIS and Acuity, teachers have identified needs of subgroups and are making instructional decisions. In addition to summative data, teacher teams use reading levels, interim assessments and baseline assessments in math to inform curricular decisions leading to enhanced student engagement.
 - o Students self-assess, create their own goals based on data and plan next steps while conferencing with teachers. There is ample evidence that teachers consistently provide effective feedback to students regarding their progress. In grades six through eight, as a result of adjustments to lessons based on data from ATS, Acuity, Aris, other data tools, and student conferencing has led to students advancing in one or more reading levels.
- The school maintains a culture of mutual trust and positive attitude toward learning that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
 - o The school staff uses attending data, incident reports, the Learning Environment Survey to gain feedback from parents to improve programs, policy and supports. Additionally, the school has chosen Charlotte Danielson research based

- framework to support pedagogy and to continue making purposeful differentiated professional development opportunities. School leaders and teachers looked at the Danielson framework to develop an understanding of the rubric and to create a positive learning culture in the school for both the students and the staff. At the beginning of the year, administrators focused on 2D, Managing Student Behavior and reflection to support the schools positive behavior goal. This produces a family-like atmosphere where adolescents develop socially, emotionally as well as academically.
- o Students voice that they had many opportunities to make decisions and take leadership roles. The Renzulli School-wide Enrichment Model program via weekly 90 minute cluster classes affords students the opportunity to take an interest survey and play an important role in choosing an enrichment activity to participate in throughout the school year. All enrichment activities are designed to foster critical thinking through inquiry, based on Blooms Taxonomy. Such enrichment includes, but not limited to, sculpture, cooking, chemistry, mechanics, drama, dance, technology, crochet, origami and digital photography. Consequently, students are empowered to take part in an activity that they have an interest in which promotes high levels of engagement as evidenced in students culminating work products and activities.
 - Teacher teams work collaboratively in the use of formative and summative data to identify academic supports for students and teachers in order to leverage change in the classroom practice. (3.2)
 - o Teachers use data regularly to set learning goals across grades and subjects to improve learning. Teacher's constant communication helps develop a common language as they incorporate Common Core Learning Standards tasks into their instructional practices, leading to initial stages of tiered work based on students needs. Members of the team speak with students about their interests and help build their motivation leading to goal-setting discussions, resulting in student's self-awareness of their academic needs.
 - o As teachers meet to discuss their data findings, they identify instructional trends for grade-level foci. Once these patterns are determined, teachers rank students accordingly into strategy-driven small groups resulting in targeted instruction. Teachers also look at sharing best practices for classroom implementation to contribute to school-wide instructional growth.
 - The school's commitment to success is provided in the innovative use of resources, including time and teacher assignments, aligned to the schools instructional goals to engage students in challenging tasks for increased success. (1.3)
 - o The principal organizes the school so that all teachers have opportunities to meet as subject-specific team and a grade specific collaborative inquiry team. Teams meet weekly by subject, monthly by grade and use research-based protocols to maximize the effect team meetings have on classroom instruction. This has allowed teachers to focus on looking at student work to determine strengths and areas of needed relating to key standards and the development of learning tasks that appropriately measure student outcomes aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. As a result, teachers and teacher teams are embedding key skills revealed from student data within lessons and learning tasks to meet the needs of all learners.
 - o Teacher Teams meet a minimum of one time per week, to discuss student progress, plan for curriculum and assess their practice. Small groups of

struggling students are assisted in reading skills through Amazon Kindles in the School wide Enrichment Model-Reading Initiative. Teachers have assessed students individually and provide direct reading instruction and conferencing with students. Using Dr. Reis School-wide Enrichment Model Reading Program (SEM-R), Language Arts teachers used Kindle E-readers with at risk students to improve the complexity of the text they read independently. Student's individual reading levels were assessed, challenging books were loaded on students E-readers and students are reading books and other digital print media on their E-readers. Teachers and parents say that students are motivated by the School-wide Enrichment Model-Reading Initiative as evidenced by their willingness to spend more time on reading tasks, find success in their learning and be more confident in reading challenging text.

- Teachers work effectively in teams to develop curriculum-aligned assessment tools, analyze student work, set teaching goals, resulting in refined curriculum and instruction that improves student outcomes. (4.2)
 - o All teacher teams engage in structured professional collaborations aligning and incorporating the CCLS. Assistant Principals and teacher leaders facilitate weekly meetings by subject and grade to assess the effectiveness of instructional decisions on student work. This work has led to consistent differentiation of math and ELA tasks for students. An inquiry approach assesses students and develops lessons in literacy and social studies. As an outgrowth of the inquiry component, students regularly respond to performance tasks. Response journals are used as a means of self reflection and next steps thus enabling teachers to develop engaging and well rounded curricula that supports all students' needs.
 - o Teacher teams meet regularly and connect their best practices, ongoing student assessments and students work products to improve teacher practice. The use of ATS, Acuity, and ARIS data assists teachers in identifying at risk students. As a result of the exemplary teacher team work, rigorous tasks, well-defined and timely units of study and instructional techniques like Amazon Kindles to encourage to read more challenging material via digital classroom libraries. Teachers have assessed students individually, are providing direct reading instruction, conferencing with students and each other each. Teachers refer to their goals periodically, in conjunction with team results, to review their accomplishments and set next steps for future instructional achievements.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase consistency in developing coherence and alignment in curricula and academic tasks that emphasize rigorous habits and critical thinking skills that foster postsecondary readiness. (1.1)
 - o While individual teachers and teacher teams have developed literacy and math tasks that engage students in challenging curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), this practice is not yet embedded across all subject areas. Consequently, students do not have the opportunity to experience tasks that promote critical thinking and postsecondary readiness in a coherent manner across subject areas. Provide students with detailed feedback with challenging next steps they are able to articulate and perform to accelerate their learning resulting in content mastery and independence.
 - o During grade level meetings, teachers discuss the results of the periodic assessments in literacy and math. Once they identify the trends and patterns,

- they regroup students and develop a plan of action with a list of strategies resulting in adjusted and targeted instruction for students. As the conversations amongst teachers continue to happen, meaningful feedback to students on their achievement is beginning to take form in some classrooms. Nonetheless, there is still inconsistent feedback in some classrooms, resulting in student's uneven understanding on why they are engaged in certain tasks and what they need to do to help accelerate their own learning.
- Retool rubrics to ensure that they are genre and task specific so that students and teachers can more accurately evaluate and better guide next steps for needed improvements that may lead to increased academic achievement. (2.3)
 - o As part of the curriculum development process, teachers and teacher teams are designing rubrics and grading policies that align to the units of study and provide effective feedback to students. However, at this time, teams are still engaged in infusing key CCLS expectations to provide actionable feedback and next steps for students. This phase of rubric and grading policy development is limiting teacher's ability to effectively measure student growth within the framework of the CCLS at this time.
 - o Although teachers and teacher teams analyze a variety of assessment data such as state test results, Acuity results, daily exit slips and they consistently use this information to identify strengths and needs of students, including special education and English Language learners, tracking specific data for other high needs populations that can effect overall accountability are not consistent, limiting teachers ability to appropriately monitor and define student needs in order to make strategic instructional decisions and plan effectively for these learners.
 - Expand correspondence with the school community regarding student learning needs and outcomes, focusing on specific subgroups so parents can assist their children in a timely manner. (3.4)
 - o A monthly newsletter from the principal, progress report information from classroom teachers, and ARIS workshops, enable parents to gain awareness regarding the performance of their children on a regular basis. However, some parents are unclear regarding short- and long-term academic goal expectations. Consequently, not all parents can effectively assist their children to perform to their full potential.
 - o Student work, including products from students in all relevant subgroups, that is on display and in portfolios and notebooks is detailed with teacher comments highlighting recommendations and next steps to realize a higher level of student academic achievement. However, guidance supports are not fully integrated, thus missing further maximizing student potential.
 - Increase support for parents to understanding student data and promote informed parental involvement in school decision making so that there can be a shared commitment to improve student outcomes. (2.4)
 - o The school provides parents of struggling students with opportunities to meet with administrators and teachers to discuss the progress of their children and how to support them. Parents report that through conversations with teachers, guidance counselor, parent coordinator and teachers they are made aware of their child's academic goals. However, the school does not yet have systems in place for providing all parents with feedback on the progress of their children with

the same frequency and, as a result, higher achieving students do not receive the same level of support at home to enable them to make further academic gains.

- o Parents report that they have adequate communication with the school. School-wide parent orientation meetings, Parent Association meetings and parent workshops are used to provide parents with information on how to access student achievement data and how to interpret this data. However, this information is transmitted mainly to those that regularly attend the meetings, resulting in a limited number of parents who have access to information regarding their child's achievement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Middle School 381	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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
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?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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	
1..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?			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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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
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