

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**K598**

**905 Winthrop Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11203**

**Principal: Jameela Horton-Ball**

**Dates of review: February 13 - 14, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly A. Wilkins**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Middle School of Marketing and Legal Studies is a middle school with 360 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 94% Black, 4% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal strategically allocates resources to support instruction, organization and programs, which supports students' academic achievement. (1.3)
  - The school leaders rightly recognize the need to strengthen students' skills in English language arts and math, therefore tactical decisions about resources, hiring, and instruction include proactive adjustments to programs, which leverage continued support for student learning. For example, a Middle School Quality Initiative Grant supports the redesign of English language arts instruction whereby a double period of literacy instruction four times per week affords all students opportunities to engage in guided, independent and differentiated literacy tasks. In addition, a fully stocked leveled library is present in every English language arts classroom. Through regular use of online tools such as Sound Reading, Achieve 3000 and Carnegie Learning, students strengthen application of learned skills. This enhanced use of online tools by students and teachers across the school results in a 16% through 19% gain on Instructionally Targeted Assessments.
  - A hiring committee selects potential faculty based on resumes, demonstration lessons and teacher-led interviews. Transparent hiring practices enlist faculty involvement in staffing decisions leading to inherent accountability. In addition, the intentional use of Teacher Data Reports matches teachers to groups of students. Also, in order to meet the individual needs and the scholastic ability of students there are mid-year adjustments to student placements. This year, the hiring of a full time reading coach and a trained Wilson Program intervention specialists engender ongoing support for students in the bottom third of the school's population. The careful selection of staff and the analysis of teacher strengths result in improved management of learning and deep commitment to the school's instructional mission.
- School leaders gather a plethora of quantitative and formative data to analyze the school's strengths and areas of need in order to bolster student progress and performance. (2.1)
  - School leaders thoroughly analyze and dissect performance and progress level data for both students and teachers. Periodic and predictive assessments by subgroups, class, and grade, as well as item analysis data, unit tests, teacher conference notes and evaluations, running records, homework, detention tracking sheets, attendance records, teacher self-evaluation of their quarterly goals and student surveys lead to the identification of trends, which aid further diagnosis of the effectiveness of curricular and instructional decisions. This deliberate focus on relevant school-level information provides an accurate picture of the school's progress and an equally clear understanding of needed next steps toward school-wide improvement.

- The consistent analysis of periodic assessments, attendance and lateness records, and class-level performance data provides actionable information on trends resulting in a structured approach to student groupings, intervention programs, and shifts in instruction. Hence, every three months, school leaders' scrutiny of interim data triggers changes to the delivery of regular and extended day instruction. Thus, school leaders provide guidance to teachers in the altering of instruction to include the use of tailored graphic organizers, skill of the week by cohort, and to drive professional development specifically planned to hone knowledge and practice in areas of student deficiency. Consequently, thorough examinations spur thoughtful responses to trends that stimulate progress by class, subgroups, subjects, and programs.
- Teams of teachers create assessments, examine various data sources and make shifts in curriculum and instructional practices resulting in decisive adjustments to student learning. (2.2)
  - Alignment of teacher-generated assessments and the organization of assessment spreadsheets across departments serve to better illuminate strengths and weaknesses in student performance and, therefore, inform instructional modifications needed for improved student outcomes. For example, weekly quizzes with embedded academic language, short responses and open-ended constructed responses target specific bodies of knowledge and skills, ensuring future instruction and curriculum sufficiently address those learning needs exemplified in student present performance. This work leads to remedial and enrichment supports.
  - Teachers' use of varied checks for understanding enhance their ability to surface student learning needs and offer precise recommendations for improved understanding of concepts and skills. Because teachers restructure lessons and utilize flexible grouping based on what they learn from timely check-ins, students are well aware of their learning needs and successes. In turn, students use rubrics to assess regularly their performance in each content area, which positively affects their scholastic growth. As such, exit slips, conference notes, student work products, and the use of a rubric-based grading system helps to identify next learning steps for all students. One student stated succinctly, "I know that I am learning because teachers help me to understand when I have difficulty with my work."
- High expectations for learning lead to dedicated support for academic and personal growth so that all students achieve. (3.4)
  - The school has instituted a school-wide academic advisory program whereby all stakeholders are keenly aware of the 80% goal, at minimum, for all students in literacy and math. Large-scale buy-in from administrators to paraprofessionals results in every constituent serving as an advisor to a select group of students. As ambassadors for the high expectation policy, faculty and parents engage in weekly conversations that galvanize continued efforts and increases performance in academic and personal development. With the support and guidance of ongoing tracking and reporting of individual progress, school and families take greater responsibility for improved attendance, better class performance, completing of assignments, and for elevated grades. Specifically, parents

reported that teachers enable their children to flourish, thus, they are ready for high school.

- The school's vested commitment in the professional growth of all teachers ensures ongoing constructive feedback and differentiated opportunities to further pedagogical development. (4.1)
  - The school utilizes a myriad of assessment tools to evaluate and support teacher practice and student achievement. Therefore, novice and senior teachers benefit from complementary models of frequent, informal cycles of feedback from school leaders and colleagues who validate the effectiveness of their practice. For example, a classroom feedback checklist, glow and grow comments, snapshot visits based on specific teaching competencies and at minimum two intervisitations per year for all teachers are augmented by formal observations and informal mentor observations that provide teachers with clear-sighted commendations and recommendations. As a result, school leaders check in with teachers new to the school, new to the profession and veteran teachers often to speak about instructional performance, examine student work and evaluate progress toward professional goals. This enduring approach to elevating the quality of classroom instruction has led to students making adequate gains on periodic assessments and their citing of solid evidence in written arguments as seen in student writing samples.
  - Several templates designed by the school, based on the Charlotte Danielson framework, help to "focus teachers on their own pedagogy," leading to clear expectations for planning and preparation, classroom environment and coherent instruction. Experienced teachers and coaches facilitate this work via low inference feedback; therefore, teachers are keenly aware of strengths in their practice and receive guidance that prompts clear next steps for attainment of their quarterly goals. In addition to establishing colleague-to-colleague growth opportunities, the principal utilizes informal data, coupled with student achievement data, to develop whole school and individual professional development plans inclusive of all teachers and paraprofessionals.
- School leaders and teams of teachers have established solid systems for setting and measuring progress toward school and individual goals and make adjustments to improve the delivery of instruction. (5.3)
  - The continual monitoring of student and teacher progress toward clearly defined annual school goals lead to revisions to curriculum and shifts in strategy-based instruction resulting in improved classroom practice. In addition, administrators evaluate student work products such as writing samples and diagnostic data, which promotes strategic long-term plans that astutely project teacher need in order to bolster precise student goal setting. As a result, systems for measuring progress engender planning, monitoring and revisions to current whole school plans with an eye toward integration of State standards.
  - Evident in teacher team interviews, teachers across the school agree that their systems for monitoring student progress allow them to "teach needed skills, set relevant goals, and reinforce strengths in student learning." Therefore, during teacher collaborations teams focus on their own pedagogy and integrate Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)

into lessons. Because they view curriculum plans as "live documents, not written in stone," monthly adjustments ensure targets for groups of students are addressed effectively and consistently.

## What the school needs to improve

- Deepen practices that consistently support articulation of the "why and how" of learning aligned to CCLS so that rigorous engagements foster critical thinking skills and promote higher learning readiness. (1.1)
  - At this time, curriculum maps and classroom practice reveal that there is a great investment in planning performance tasks in all content areas in order to close gaps in learning. In addition, the school has also placed "unique emphasis on exposing students to a distinctive Marketing and Legal Studies curriculum." Consequently, explorations of careers in the 21st century, facilitated by the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship, provide students with opportunities to engage in real life experiences that inspire post-secondary and career thinking. Nevertheless, not all lessons engage students in consistent articulation of connections to content, challenge their thinking or stimulate meta-cognitive processes. Thus, a lack of consistent rigor in practice hinders academic growth.
- Increase the efficacy of differentiated instruction to include skillful teacher questioning that leads to rich discussions in order to maximize learning for all students. (1.2)
  - The school demonstrates a coherent set of beliefs including using the workshop model as a framework, differentiated entry points, application of learning to real life situations, and the use of data as a means to assess students' areas of need. Despite obvious support for the common instructional platform, teachers' skills for effective questioning are emerging. As a result, academic discourse necessary for students to deepen understanding, extend their thinking, defend answers, and dispel misconceptions is not sufficiently in place. Hence, the potential of students to develop deeper understanding of complex ideas is not fully maximized.
- Further develop practices that involve families in school decision-making to include specific information about the school's direction, thus fostering broader community support and increased student achievement. (3.1)
  - School leadership and teachers analyze a great wealth of data, including academic achievement outcomes, trends in individual classrooms, detention records and student work, in order to identify key school-wide goals that benefit the majority of students. However, at this time, parent voice in school-wide decision-making is primarily regulated to members of the School Leadership Team. Hence, there is very little planning that enlists additional parent ambassadors. Consequently, the extended school community is not fully informed of the year's action plan for continued school improvement, which thwarts broader movement and support toward specified instructional goals.

- Strengthen communication with families to further engagement and commitment in the educational success of their children in order to advance positive outcomes. (2.4)
  - Parents express contentment with the continual communication provided by the school via advisory teachers, weekly progress reports, text messages, phone calls, Pupil Path and the school's open door policy. This reciprocal communication keeps them abreast of academic, attendance, and behavioral performance and progress of their children so that they can focus on achievement at home. However, although available, not all parents have access to tools such as Skedula and ARIS Parent Link. Therefore, some parents are uncertain of the additional supports that are available to assist student learning, limiting their understanding of their children's performance.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

|   |           |          |          |           |
|---|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| <b>School name: Middle School of Marketing and Legal Studies</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>  |

| <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.</b>                           |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
|--|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <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>          |           |                   |           |                       |
| <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.</b>                   |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| <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>  |                   |           |                       |
| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>  |                       |          |                   |           |                   |           |                       |
| <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> |