

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**M.S. 260 Clinton School Writers and Artists
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School M260**

**425 WEST 33RD STREET
New York
NY 10001**

Principal: Jonathan Levin

**Dates of review: May 08-09, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Mariano Guzman**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 260 Clinton School Writers [amp] Artists is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 274 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 11% Black, 24% Hispanic, 51% White, 11% Asian students and 0% other students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 35% of the students enrolled and girls account for 65%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 96.1%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school designs its curricula in alignment with key State standards, integrating Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to challenge students' thinking, in order to increase academic outcomes. (1.1)
 - The leadership and faculty integrate the CCLS tasks with the curricula aligned to State standards. Although 2011 Citywide Expectations call for students to learn one CCLS aligned English language arts (ELA) and one math unit, the school has also created a Social Studies curriculum with units that are aligned to CCLS, ensuring that students produce rigorous work products throughout all grades. Developing ELA skills is central to the mission of the school and, as such, literacy tasks are embedded in math, science, social studies and the Arts—a core value of the school. Each unit has outcomes that are scaffolded vertically, so that the expectation for students' whether advanced or struggling increases each year paced to meet their individual needs. As a result, the curriculum supports an interdisciplinary approach to learning, preparing students to meet the rigorous demands of high school.
- The school's commonly practiced philosophy around student learning is reflected in differentiated instructional practices to support students at their entry points that promote higher outcomes for all learners. (1.2)
 - The school's pedagogical practice is aligned to the curriculum and underscored by a belief that students learn best when they are invested in their own learning. As such, Clinton students set reading and writing goals. Teachers throughout the school use these goals combined with data and their personal understanding of students' strengths, interests and needs to group all students including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). Formative assessment data are reviewed frequently and student learning outcomes, and student groups are adjusted based on learning outcomes. In so doing, students are continuously provided with multiple entry points into the curricula, scaffolded to improve their learning. During classroom visits, students worked in groups according to their needs on project based activities. Graphic organizers offered various entry points for all students and resulted in active student engagement.
- Effective and strategic organizational decisions ensure the instructional focus is met resulting in increased student work efforts and outcomes. (1.3)
 - As a new school leader, the principal recognized the strong culture of teaching and learning that has been the school's tradition. With three principals in five years, the school has gone through much upheaval with many short-lived organizational decisions. This has been a year of ensuring stability while continuing to build the school's capacity to deliver an Arts enriched quality education. To this end, the school has allocated resources to bolster the Performing Arts, Creative Writing and Visual Arts programs. For example, this year students put on two major productions: *The Winter Festival* and *In The Woods*. Consequently, this has yielded positive outcomes in students' writing as well as their artistic skills. In addition, this year, the school was among the few public middle schools in New York to receive a distinguished Great Schools, Inc. with a rating of 9 out of 10.

- School leaders ensure that teachers have multiple opportunities to meet including weekly department and grade level meetings. Principal, assistant principal and special education specialist regularly participate in these grade and department meetings where faculty review student work products pertaining to an assigned task while engaging in discussions on best practices, collegial feedback and support aimed at improving classroom practices. This collaborative work serves to further refine their skills in data analysis, adopt best practices aligned to the school's instructional goals and focus on student achievement. It also serves to create a foundation for the Professional Development Communities embedded in Richard DuFour and Robert Marzano's work that the school is beginning to preview for possible adoption in to their curriculum. This ongoing team practices supports teachers in increasing students' achievement.
- Through regular use of a range of relevant data, leaders and faculty have an ongoing understanding of the performance and progress of individuals, by group and subject, which informs instructional and organizational adjustments. (2.2)
 - As a new leader to the school, the principal, conducted a thorough review of the previous three years' data in math and ELA, and was greatly concerned with the school's ELA results on the NYS exam, especially for students in the lowest third. Meetings with the school leadership team and faculty led to a strategic plan that aligned the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) with instructional initiatives that focused inquiry team work on students who had not made sufficient progress in ELA in the 6th grade and to determine why they struggled. In addition, grade teams were encouraged to pilot protocols, including rubrics for looking at student work. Content teams focused on revising their curriculum and tasks to align with CCLS and the school's instructional focus on improving writing. As a result, formative assessment data combined with predictive assessments indicates fewer students in the lowest tier.
 - Faculty utilizes multiple summative and formative assessments to effectively measure student learning of content and skills as a way of building a detailed profile of what each student knows and areas in need of further development inclusive of students with disabilities and ELLs. During weekly planning meetings, faculty review and analyze student work products through an inquiry team approach that helps inform gaps in curricula or specific units of study. As a result, predictive acuity results indicate that students in the lowest one-third have made gains.
- Teacher development is driven by a commonly understood and adopted research based framework, ensuring that all teachers meet pedagogical expectations in order to improve student outcomes. (4.1)
 - *Danielson's Framework for Teaching* was introduced to the staff in September, and time was spent on reviewing the evidence for highly effective practices in each component. Leadership and faculty established a system for feedback that is formative in nature, and transparent to the teacher. Following an informal visit, the teacher is debriefed in person. A summary of that meeting, including feedback on the teaching and learning observed and a rating on the Danielson components that the administrator observed along with next steps form the basis for an electronic file in Google Doc. This process allows only the administrator and the individual teacher to view a running record of their ongoing feedback. Each teacher has been visited a minimum of seven times. In addition to regular classroom visits, each teacher sets a mid-year goal based on their experience with Danielson that serves as an additional lens for future classroom visits, and will be revisited at the end of the year. As a result, teachers shared that they felt held accountable for implementing teaching practices that impact student learning as well as supported to improve their professional growth.

- The school provides a safe, nurturing environment throughout the building that cultivates mutual respect and care for students and adults, resulting in an educational environment that promotes academic achievement and personal growth. (1.4)
 - Leadership and faculty are diligently working to restore the pride, morale, respect and a safe environment that had been a hallmark of the school. As a first step, the principal moved his office from the first floor to be among the classroom life of the school, immediately increasing visibility and availability. A new website provides families with up-to-date resource information including the school's guidance department that offers students and families a wide range of services from individual student counseling to group counseling to parent connections focusing on social, emotional and behavioral interventions that can be applied at home. Students were eager to share their ability and comfort in talking to their principal, assistant principal, teachers, counselor, and other adults whenever they have a problem or the need arises. These actions have reduced incidents at the school as reported in the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) but their impact is most palpable in the classroom where visits reveal students eager to learn and fully engaged in their work. As further evidence of the success of these interventions, the Learning Environment Survey (LES) indicates that 98% of parents, students and teachers feel the school maintains a safe and orderly environment for learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance communication to families so that all constituent groups are involved in setting goals that include higher levels of challenge in order to accelerate student learning. (3.4)
 - The school communicates high expectations to students and families regarding academic and behavioral performance through newsletters, a website, calendars and events hosted by the parent coordinator. While many of the families can support their children at home, some families indicate the need for ongoing support from the school in preparing their children for the demand and expectations set forth by the CCLS, including college readiness. Consequently, the absence of targeted support for families limits some parents in helping their children reach their potential.
- Develop greater consistency in evaluating and adjusting pedagogical practices in order to build coherence and accelerate student learning. (5.1)
 - In collaboration with faculty, school leadership has developed effective structures that evaluate assessment practices leading to make adjustments in formative assessments and CCLS-aligned performance tasks. However, the school has not created a parallel structure to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum, instructional and organizational decisions. Consequently, there is a lack of data-informed instructional decisions that result in revisions and a change to classroom practice in order to ensure the curriculum prepares all students for higher education.
- Evaluate structures and systems to ensure that assessment data is organized and analyzed to make needed adjustments that guarantee cohesiveness with school practices and policies. (5.2)
 - School leaders are developing structures to assess, evaluate, and adjust school practices. Currently, and between marking periods, the school and individual teachers inform students and families about progress relative to academics, attendance and behavior. However, the school has not yet developed a singular coherent method by

which to use all the available data to best guide the work of individual and groups of teachers and keep families informed. Consequently, the school is missing an opportunity to maximize the use of academic and behavioral data to further improve student outcomes by strengthening connections between home and school.

- Build on the goal setting process to incorporate short-term timeframes for improving teacher and student outcomes so that needed revision of goals occurs as data is recorded and analyzed. (5.3)
 - The administration has analyzed a wide range of data from last year's CEP and summative assessments to set instructional goals for students this year. However, teams of teachers and individual teachers have not fully established interim goals for targeted students. As a result, the lack of a coherent system to measure ongoing progress toward goals during the school year limits the school's ability to make the most informed adjustments to instructional and curricular decisions that will optimize instruction and student performance.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: M.S. 260 Clinton School Writers and Artists	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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