

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Lower Manhattan Community Middle School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School M896

26 BROADWAY
NEW YORK
NY 10004

Principal: KELLY MCGUIRE

Dates of review: April 03 - 04, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Mariano Guzman

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Lower Manhattan Community Middle School is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 243 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 23% Black, 36% Hispanic, 16% White, 23% Asian students and 2% other students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 31% 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 92.9%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school designs its curricula to be engaging and rigorous incorporating State standards and City expectations, targeting the various learners in the school. (1.1)
 - The leadership and faculty integrate the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks with the curricula aligned to the State standards. The school has adapted English language arts (ELA) and math tasks from the CCLS to ensure that students produce rigorous work products throughout the grades. Curriculum maps are designed with literacy tasks that include science and social studies content which emphasize real world applications and push critical thinking. For example, students write persuasive essays with evidence to support their opinions on whether technology is hurting kids. Emphasis on the needs of English language learners (ELLs) and special needs students is evident throughout the curricula to support closing the achievement gap. Classroom lessons through questioning demand that all students use academic vocabulary in their responses, which results in elevated levels of student work as evidenced in classes and posted student projects.
- The leadership makes targeted organizational decisions that maximize the use of the budget, staff and assignments that support the school's instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The principal employs a distributive leadership model that forms the structure for both curricular and departmental decision-making and design, relying heavily on highly talented teacher leaders. This collaborative model guides the work of curriculum coaches and Network specialists with teacher teams and individual teacher coaching. Summative data, interim benchmark assessments and CCLS-aligned task results inform their collaborative work. This approach has maximized the use of organizational human resources and created a strategic structure for using school-wide data to inform teacher teams and classroom practice. As a result, student data is tracked carefully and analyzed in order to guide instructional goals and assessment purposes for student success.
 - The school is programmed to provide teams of teachers the opportunity to meet regularly to share best practices and improve instruction for identified students. For example, a teacher team reviewing students' persuasive writing pieces focused their inquiry on specific strategies for ensuring that all learners were able to develop and express their voice through persuasive writing. This support allows teachers to design differentiated instructional strategies which provide all students access to rigorous and challenging work as evidenced in student work products.
- School leaders provide faculty clear feedback with next steps to improve teacher practice and raise levels of student achievement. (4.1)
 - School leaders use *Danielson's Framework for Teaching* as their research-based evaluation rubric. Using a collaborative approach in introducing the model to faculty has led to its success as an observation tool for the school. Though all six components of the Framework guide frequent observations and feedback by administrators as well the work of the coaches within classrooms, teachers chose one of the six components around which they developed a professional goal. Additionally, at the beginning of the school-year, school leaders and faculty identified a set of expectations—agreed upon by all—for all classrooms, that outlined rigorous teaching and instruction, and the expectations for a professional and well-functioning classroom. These expectations

combined with the Danielson Framework serve to detail a belief of how students learn best. Each teacher has a detailed action plan that emanates from the frequent observations and includes focused support on meeting their goal. As a result, while teachers report that they are held accountable for teaching practices, they feel professionally treated and supported in their work.

- Parents and students greatly appreciate the safe and respectful school environment that supports learning, encourages attendance and promotes personal growth throughout the school community. (1.4)
 - The NYC School Learning Environment Survey (LES) reveals that 96% of parents, and 89% of students feel that the school provides a safe and respectful environment for learning. Students shared that teachers go out of their way to be helpful and if ever there is a need, an adult pairs with a student to provide guidance and support. The school provides professional support to staff in developing strategies that help students learn and appreciate how to respect each other as well as the learning environment. The school maintains over a 93.4% rate of attendance and suspensions have seen a reduction. Whether in class or in the halls, students throughout the building appeared happy to be in school, eager to learn and engaged in positive behavior. Consequently, the school is successful in maintaining a focus on the academic and personal development of both students and adults.
- School leaders and faculty use data-informed processes for planning and goal setting across grades and subjects to improve student outcomes. (3.1)
 - The principal's performance objectives and school goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) focused on increasing students' proficiency levels in ELA and math. Key to this work is fortifying the work of team meetings by creating a structured process of looking at student work and designing performance based tasks and supporting curriculum units aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Additionally, the school aims to reduce the number of disruptions to classrooms as measured by the number of demerits assigned by teachers as per the school-based disciplinary system. These goals and objectives leverage growth in students' academic and social-emotional outcomes as noted on Scantron Assessments and a reduction in school wide incidents in the Online Occurrence Reporting System (OORS). Goals for the year are set through an inclusive process with the principal, assistant principal, coaches and grade team leaders reviewing summative NY State testing results, Progress Report, and interim benchmark assessments. Moreover, teacher strengths and areas in need of support are identified and strategies are developed to bolster the practice of teachers in need of support. Content area specialists receive professional development in literacy aimed at helping them incorporate reading strategies in their content area teaching. These efforts were clearly evident in science, social studies and mathematics classrooms visited. As a result, most teachers are poised to provide all students with rigorous work scaffolded to address areas in need of support.
- The school offers a wide range of opportunities for professional development for teachers that align to school-wide goals and focus on improving teacher practice to support improved student achievement. (4.3)
 - The administration actively encourages faculty to take on leadership roles, primarily in leading ongoing professional development sessions that support the school's goals to increase students' performance in ELA and math. Key to fulfilling this objective are professional development sessions that are fortifying the work of teacher team meetings by creating a structured process of looking at student work and designing performance based tasks and supporting curriculum units aligned with

the CCSS. Additionally, the school aims to reduce the number of disruptions in classrooms as measured by the number of demerits assigned by teachers as per the school-based disciplinary system. Therefore, the school offers professional support for classroom management. These goals and objectives leverage growth in students' academic and social-emotional outcomes as noted on Scantron Assessments and a reduction in school-wide incidents in OORS. Professional development goals for the year are set through an inclusive process with the principal, assistant principal, coaches and grade team leaders reviewing summative NY State testing results, Progress Report, and interim benchmark assessments. Moreover, teacher strengths and areas in need of support are identified and strategies are developed to bolster the practice of teachers in need of support. Content area specialists receive professional development in literacy aimed at helping them incorporate reading strategies in their content area teaching. These efforts were clearly evident in science, social studies and mathematics classrooms visited. As a result of differentiated professional development opportunities, teachers are poised to provide all students with rigorous work scaffolded to address areas in need of support in order to improve learning outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure the consistent use of differentiation of classroom learning activities so that all lessons engage students and offer challenges at their level, including effective questioning that elicits higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Throughout the school the majority of faculty plan lessons that align to the school's core belief of flexible grouping to improve student learning and use appropriate scaffolds to differentiate instruction in response to students' performance and specific needs and interest. However, these strategies are not consistently or strategically informed and revised by the feedback and discussion which occurs at regular team meetings. Consequently, across classrooms and subject areas lessons do not always present students' with appropriate challenges, especially evident with advanced students, and opportunities for them to meet their full potential.
- Increase consistency in strategies and policies for analyzing data that informs teaching practice in identifying and addressing needs of subgroups. (2.2)
 - In addition to benchmark assessments, grade teams and individual teachers evaluate student work against the CCLS tools and resources, made available by the Department of Education (DOE). These data reviews assist in identifying the needs of most students and lead to some adjustments in curricula, assessments and instructional practices. However, teachers do not consistently incorporate the use of ongoing formative assessment data into their daily practice to inform adjustments in pedagogy aligned to the needs student subgroups. Consequently, instructional strategies and learning tasks are not always strategically revised, hindering opportunities to meet the needs of all students.
- Further develop structures to regularly evaluate and adjust curriculum, instructional and organizational practices to meet the learning needs of students and expectations of the CCLS. (5.1)
 - School leadership and teams engage in periodic review of curricular and instructional practices. However, structures to regularly evaluate and revise these areas across all grades and subjects have not been completely developed and aligned to the expectations of the CCLS and the use of organizational resources. The absence of ongoing articulated structures inhibits coherence of practices and policies as well as lessens opportunities to regularly inform the administration for decision making to

improve instructional strategies and curriculum development. Thus limiting the maximum benefits of appropriating resources, resulting in less than optimal impact on student outcomes.

- Refine the use of data analysis to guide the school in evaluating the effectiveness of teamwork so that distributive leadership is made in a timely manner to further support teacher collaboration. (5.4)
 - School leaders often participate in teacher team meetings sharing best strategies on how to support the ongoing inquiry work of the teams. Teams are facilitated by grade and or department leaders with additional opportunities available for teacher leadership that may include reciprocal coaching. While individual inquiry teams set goals and track student progress, the school does not consistently employ a coherent and aligned system of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teacher collaborations across all teams. In addition, school leaders are seeking ways of sharing team findings school-wide as often there are across-grade implications that can be applied to working with targeted students. Accordingly, the full impact of this work on classroom practice is yet to be realized for the advancement of all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Lower Manhattan Community Middle School	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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