

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Juan Morel Campos Secondary School

Middle-High School 071

**215 Heyward Street
Brooklyn, NY 11206**

Principal: Eric Fraser

Dates of review: May 28 - 29, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Juan Morel Campos Secondary School is a middle-high school with 865 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 15% Black, 81% Hispanic and 3% White students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 27% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 83.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has put structures in place to ensure that educators focus regularly on improving outcomes for the students they share. (1.3)
 - Recent hires of a seventh grade guidance counselor and an assistant principal with expertise in working with English language learners and students with disabilities support the school in meeting the needs and improving the academic performance of sub-groups of students. In addition, the school's funding is used to provide after school extended learning time programs that include Regents' exam preparation and additional literacy instruction for English language learners. In particular, the principal allocates funding for paraprofessionals to work during the after school programs so that students with disabilities can participate. In support of a school goal to increase credit accumulation and improve graduation rates, the school uses the Apex program that allows teachers to target students who need to earn additional credit and offer them individualized on-line instruction. According to the schools credit accumulation tracker, after the first marking period in the spring term, 67 students were at risk of not passing one or more of their core courses and by the end of the second marking period that number was reduced to 52.
 - The principal programs teachers to accommodate weekly meetings of grade level teams and inquiry teams. He instituted monthly meetings with the leaders of these teams to facilitate sharing of information about student progress and to focus attention on the school's sub-groups. A teacher noted that the grade-level team meetings offer the best opportunity to discuss instructional alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). A grade team discussed how they have been integrating the demands of the Citywide Instructional Expectations across all content areas, such as infusing literacy into chemistry lessons, and that students routinely expect to write essays in all of their classes. The principal encourages intervisitations with other schools in the network to share best practices and expects staff members within the school to understand the skills and content in grades or courses that precede and follow the one they teach. Teachers report that these intervisitations between colleagues also offer the opportunity to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of their incoming students, thereby helping to improve their own ability to plan challenging tasks that are at the right level of rigor.
- Feedback, structured within a research-based framework, offers commendations and recommendations resulting in improved instructional practices of new and experienced teachers. (4.1)
 - In addition to conducting learning walks as a cabinet, the principal and assistant principals observe teachers, both formally and informally, so that every teacher has three to seven observations each year. Data from informal observations is tracked according to the components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching and is used, along with the analysis of student work products, to determine additional supports for individual

teachers, departments, or the whole faculty. For example, after determining that teachers were struggling with component 1e (designing coherent instruction), the school devoted Brooklyn-Queens day to professional development on creating and sharing lesson plans that explicitly include key assessments and supports for English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers reported that they are observed at least monthly, occasionally unannounced, with follow-up conferences or written feedback. While formal observations do not reference the Danielson framework, they still incorporate the same expectations for practice. Teachers also report that the feedback provided by supervisors references prior conversations to reinforce expectations and includes suggestions for improvement, such as creating a more student centered learning environment or how to group students more effectively. One teacher stated that the feedback provided by the principal is “dead on” and provides suggestions one can really use. The principal meets with new teachers using a consultancy protocol to have a non-evaluative feedback session and follows up all observations to note areas where teachers have implemented recommendations that result in improved instructional practice.

- Furthering achievement of the school’s goals, teacher teams focus on improving instructional practices through analysis of student work leading to more challenging tasks for students. (4.2)
 - All teachers participate in teams that focus on the academic, social, and emotional needs of their students and are expected to create action plans with measurable outcomes that are reviewed by the principal to ensure alignment with school goals around integration of CCLS. Grade level teams include a guidance counselor to inform attendance improvement initiatives and provide information about available interventions. At one team meeting, teachers were discussing what recommendations they would give to the next grade level team about how to meet the needs of the students they would have in the fall, specifically regarding writing. This team focused on supporting students in stating claims and counterclaims and using transitional words to improve their writing and discussed how the scaffolds they were providing could gradually be removed in the next grade, or as they put it, how to “take off the training wheels.” They reviewed a series of essays, written from January to April by a ninth grade student, and found the use of transitions improved with each essay so that by April, the student fluently used phrases such as, “it is often said ..,” “this leads me to believe..,” and “on the other hand....” This same team noted that science and math teachers had adopted the strategy of using a poster with transitional word prompts that had come to their attention through their team lead’s participation in the principal’s monthly team leader meetings. The principal uses these meetings to share information, to spread successful practices, to hear from teachers about issues that arise, and to obtain input on policies such as revising and adopting a new school mission statement and instituting a new grading policy. Noting the importance of participating on this school-wide team, one grade team was observed discussing the best way to share the responsibilities of leadership and how they could strengthen their role in advising the principal on instructional issues. Teachers report that their work on teams gives them input into decisions on school improvement initiatives focused on improving student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend curriculum design and planning to ensure the school's key standards and the instructional shifts are consistently and explicitly addressed so that all learners develop higher-order skills. (1.1)
 - Teachers plan their units of study to align with the Common Core Learning Standards, incorporating literacy standards into all content areas, including the arts, with special emphasis on social studies and science. Teachers explain that they design rigorous tasks to take students out of their comfort zone in order to push them to the next level. However, planning for Common Core aligned tasks that consistently challenge all students to achieve college readiness is not uniform across classrooms or for all sub-groups of students in the school. A ninth grade unit on the power of new media requires students to state an argument on whether cell phones should be banned from schools and to support their opinion with references from a recent news article on the distractions of digital media. An eighth grade unit requires students to choose any metaphor from a spoken word poem on bullying and to write about the author's purpose and identify the message implied by the language. While these tasks allow students to develop skills through writing arguments or to develop complex academic language as required by the instructional shifts, neither assignment includes strategies for English language learners or adaptations to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Out of ten middle school English language arts lesson or unit plans reviewed, only three contained explicit references to differentiation strategies for English language learners or for students in the schools' lowest third. This lack of differentiation for diverse learners inhibits the school from fully promoting college and career readiness skills for all students.
- Implement consistent instructional strategies across grades and content areas so that all students are fully engaged with rigorous and challenging tasks. (1.2)
 - Students in some classrooms engage in tasks that challenge them to state and defend arguments, use multiple strategies to solve problems with applications for the real world and develop academic language. In a middle school English as a second language class, students read a poem about a rainy day and used a graphic organizer to categorize words and images according to the five senses thus reinforcing vocabulary development. In a living environment class, students used sequences of DNA to support claims about whether blood found at a crime scene belonged to the victim or a suspect of a crime. However, not all students are actively engaged with tasks that require them to demonstrate their thinking. In a history class, students watched a slide show that included pictures of presidents of the United States from Nixon to Reagan and images associated with major events of their presidency, such as the hostages from the American embassy in Iran in 1979. The teacher asked low-level questions such as, "What is the definition of a hostage?" Students were not actively discussing the issues raised by the images or engaging in activities that required higher order thinking. In another class, students showed how they determined the volume of rectangular prisms using improper mathematical notation, which was not corrected by

the teacher, leaving the students subject to future misunderstandings. This inconsistency in instructional practices does not allow all students to engage in challenging activities and to produce high-level work that prepares them for college and career.

- Strengthen the practice of using results from assessments and frequent checks for understanding to refine and revise curriculum and incorporate more opportunities for students to track their own progress. (2.2)
 - Teachers create assessment tasks for CCLS aligned units of study and are in the process of creating a school-wide assessment calendar for next year. In order to standardize the way students are assessed, the principal asked the faculty to design and implement a new grading policy, which requires 50% of a student's grade to be derived from formative assessments, classwork, and homework. The rest of the grade is determined by summative assessments. Teachers are at varying stages of implementing the new policy. A ninth grade English language arts unit of study assesses students using a sequence of three argumentative essays: a diagnostic assessment to be completed without teacher support; a formative assessment to be completed with teacher support; and a summative task to be completed in class without teacher support. However, not every teacher includes both formative and summative assessments in their units of study thus limiting the opportunities to give feedback to students that is consistent with the grading policy.
 - The use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment is uneven across the school. While many teachers plan to use exit tickets intended to inform their groupings and adjust content instruction for the next lesson, the actual use of exit tickets was not observed in any class. Some teachers create contracts with students outlining the objectives of the course and requiring students to set targets for reaching them. The students review the records of their own performance on quizzes, tests, and homework, with teachers to determine if they are on track to attaining their goals. But this level of student ownership is not consistent across grades or classes. Students are not self-assessing in all of their courses and teachers are missing the opportunity to gather data to inform revisions to instruction aimed at meeting the diverse learning needs of all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name:	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?		X					
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?		X					
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed