

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Middle School for Academic and Social Excellence

K334

**1224 Park Place
Brooklyn, NY 11213**

Principal: Andrea Whitehurst

Dates of review: October 24-25, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Middle School for Academic and Social Excellence is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 226 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 86.3% Black, 11.9% Hispanic, 1.3% White, and 0.0% Asian students. The student body includes 6.6% English language learners and 21.7% special education students. Boys account for 52.2% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47.8%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.34%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Pedagogical practices are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs on how students learn best through a school wide focus on strategies for multiple entry points into the curricula. (1.2)
 - The school has a set of beliefs that impact student outcomes centered around explicit modeling by teachers, followed by guided practice. Most teachers engage in the workshop model with lessons that are increasingly anchored to the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers are beginning to challenge students' thinking through questioning. Data is used as a means to identify students' areas of need and to differentiate instruction via flexible grouping based on student learning styles. Consequently, students are beginning to demonstrate higher scores on informal assessments and teacher observations in comparison to last year's performance.
- The school is improving the alignment of assessments to curricula and using ongoing assessments and grading practices to monitor progress and adjust curriculum and instruction. (2.2)
 - Department teams create and use common assessments that mirror New York State examinations to gauge the effectiveness of the implementation of the curriculum and, in particular, the emphasis on literacy based activities. For example, during an English Language Arts team meeting, pedagogues conducted an item analysis of student responses to ascertain which topics and concepts students had not mastered and defined strategies for how to assist them. Teacher teams supplement summative data analysis with periodic assessments from Acuity and classroom assessment data in order to identify student strengths and areas of needs. For example, Math teachers use assessment results to track and strengthen students' foundation skill levels. These teachers also use skill building to evaluate and support students' math fluency. Consequently, the collaboration amongst teachers has created a focused inquiry group leveraging level 1 students to increase student achievement.
- The school provides teachers with support to improve practices and to promote a more effective learning community for all. (4.1)
 - The principal conducts both formal and informal observations utilizing the Danielson framework, focusing on questioning and discussion to support teacher development. Newer teachers are supported by lead teachers. Teachers are given verbal and written feedback to provide steps for improvement. Based on the needs identified during the observation cycle the school is developing a system to design and facilitate professional development. Equally, there is support for more experienced staff members by promoting leadership and offering opportunities for them to explore their own professional interests, such as attending workshops

conducted by their network team to expand their repertoire and increase their skill set.

What the school needs to improve

- Further refine the curriculum to develop higher order skills for a variety of learners with different needs to increase student outcomes (1.1)
 - Although, the staff is currently incorporating the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) into the curriculum and has developed curriculum maps designed to engage students in their learning, many teachers do not demonstrate the necessary skill level to adapt the curricula so that it challenges students performing at varied ability levels, especially higher achieving students. This is evidenced by only 14% of students performing on grade level in English – putting the school in the bottom 6% of middle schools citywide. Similarly, only 23% of students were performing on grade level in Math – putting the school in the bottom 9% of middle schools citywide. The school has focused on reading informational text and author's purpose. While the curriculum is designed to reflect key standards, academic tasks that probe for understanding and application of learning and promote rigorous habits do not coherently extend across all classes or grade levels so that every student is suitably challenged.
- Further develop strategic organizational decisions, in particular hiring practices and use of resources, across the school to support improvement in student learning. (1.3)
 - The principal is building capacity with her staff. As such, the lead teacher works on the budget, scheduling and creation of student and teacher programs. However, students are not offered a second language to facilitate their attainment of the State intermediate learning standards. As a result, students are not meeting the State mandate, which requires the completion of at least one unit of study, defined as 180 minutes per week for the school year, in a language other than English before grade 8. The school is recognized as a persistently dangerous school for the 2011-2012 school year. As such, the school focused their attention on managing behavior. Though the school has seen a reduction in suspensions, there is no linkage to a “tried and true” method embraced by all constituencies. The school has not introduced a research based positive behavioral intervention nor support program to prevent problem behavior and to maintain effective learning environments across the school. For the 2011-2012 school year even to the time of this review, the school does not employ a guidance counselor and is out of compliance in providing services to their mandated students and students who are in need of counseling. This hinders the school in reaching their instructional goals and their students' individual learning needs.
- Ensure that structures are in place to regularly evaluate effectiveness of instructional practices, organizational decisions and professional development to promote coherence and continual growth to elevate student achievement. (5.1)

- Currently the school does not have a system in place to evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices in response to student learning needs. For example, AIS programs or consultants are purchased without evaluating their effectiveness. The lack of measures to closely evaluate implementation of the recommended instructional practices, programs and initiatives or assess the effectiveness of organizational resources hinders necessary shifts in teaching and practices that may need to occur to undergird accelerated learning.
- Under the current leadership, the school is experiencing a re-examination of its core beliefs and values. This re-examination is resulting in change, both large and small, to prior assessment results, curriculum and expectations around pedagogy. The formalization of teacher teams is moving this work along. However, there has not yet been any real analysis of the effectiveness of many of the changes or of the outcomes for teacher teams in terms of student achievement. Although the principal has made some adjustments, based upon annual reflection of school-wide systems, teacher teams and individual teachers are not yet doing the same.

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