

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

M.S. 256 Academic & Athletic Excellence

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 03M256

**154 WEST 93 STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10025**

Principal: Jeffrey S. Perl

**Dates of review: February 11-12, 2013
Lead Reviewer: Ilene Altschul**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 256 Academic & Athletic Excellence is a Middle School with 169 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 49% Black, 49% Hispanic, 2% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 28% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 88.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school uses the resources in support of the instructional goals and provides structured time for teachers to meet regularly resulting in increased instructional capacity. (1.3)
 - Resources are used for personnel, technology and instructional materials to meet the overarching goals of meeting the citywide instructional expectations, instructing the students in the least restrictive environment and to implement the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) to increase student achievement in English language arts. The school uses their Special Education teachers to provide students the supports needed in the least restrictive environment and has increased the number of students receiving instruction through the integrated co-teaching model. Computer adaptive programs and laptops for teacher directed lessons are being utilized to enhance instruction in all content areas and to provide students intervention services meeting the expectations of MSQI. Through the twenty-first century grant, collaboration with Urban Advantage and CHAMPS fitness program, students participate in afterschool programs for additional academic support, social-emotional support and enrichment in science, sports, and the arts. As a result of the use of resources, there is alignment between the use of partnerships and programs supporting the work towards meeting their instructional goals.
 - The school has prioritized to ensure that there is structured time for teachers to meet in department teams and grade level teams every week. In addition, the school's inquiry team which is focused on improving vocabulary development meets after school. Minutes from the team meetings include items discussed, next steps, person responsible and due date are shared with the administration through weekly submission. As a result of team meetings, teachers are developing protocols to review student work and share best practices improving their instructional capacity.
- Across classrooms, alignment of common assessments and rubrics with the curricula is developing to measure student progress, enabling teachers to identify students' needs. (2.2)
 - The school uses targeted assessments to identify students' reading levels and measure progress. Through the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) students are assessed through Accelerated Reader (AR) a STAR reading assessment which is computerized to continually adjust questions and increase or reduce the level of difficulty to match students' ability. The school also uses Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), Achieve 3000, Acuity in English language arts and math, and performance tasks across content areas as measures of progress. All teachers developed the grading policy of 50% mastery, 25% growth, and 25% work habits. All grades are entered on Jupiter grades and made accessible for teachers, administration, students and parents. Teacher teams review student writing and vocabulary development through the Word Generation program to calibrate across the grade and ensure consistency in assessing students' writing using a rubric. Through the use of "Do Now" in the beginning of the period, circulating, conferring, fish bowl, and exit slips teachers are able to check for student understanding. As a result of the collected data and assessment practices, teachers are able to identify students' needs and measure progress.
- School leaders are beginning to support teacher growth through frequent cycles of classroom observation and targeted professional development. (4.1)

- The administration observes teachers regularly through formal and informal observations or short walk-through visits. The Danielson framework is used to leverage and guide teachers' reflection. Teachers state that they feel supported and receive actionable feedback in a timely manner. New teachers state that they receive mentoring and additional assistance from the administration through professional development, feedback from observations and review of lesson plans. One teacher received support in using data to create flexible grouping and another teacher was provided support in creating lessons that are more student directed. Through the TeachBoost Reporting system, all observations are logged and areas of growth and trends are easily identified. As of January 2013, professional development sessions have been planned to target the needs of the staff. For example, administrators conducted sessions on classroom management and lesson planning. Through conversations with administrators, teachers identify their professional goals as areas for growth. The rubric is used to guide these conversations and direct teachers towards their next steps to improve practice, through participation in intervisitations and professional development opportunities. As a result of observation feedback and professional development opportunities, teachers' instructional practices are progressing and moving along the research based framework continuum.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the common core aligned units and academic tasks to emphasize key standards and rigorous habits to cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
 - Teachers create common core aligned units and academic tasks for their grade and content area. These units are uploaded on Atlas Rubicon. Key standards are identified and focus on citing specific textual evidence to support the analysis of the text across content areas. In addition, there is an emphasis on vocabulary development which is supported by the Word Generation program. However, teachers state that they write the units independently without purposeful decisions around key standards and citywide instructional shifts. The units include rigorous tasks such as participation in a debate on the causes of the Civil War or writing an argumentative essay on whether *Stargirl* is a nonconformist or conformist. Consequently, the units are limited in accessibility and inconsistently address the needs of students with disabilities. As a result, curricula and tasks do not provide rigorous or challenging opportunities for most students.
- Develop teacher practices to provide multiple entry points into the curricula with challenging tasks to engage all students in high levels of thinking and participation. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms, teachers' practice is beginning to reflect the common belief that students learn best when they are engaged in discussion and group work and supported through questioning and scaffolds. However these practices are inconsistent throughout classroom visits. In several classes the students were involved in group work but the assigned task did not provide the appropriate scaffolds that enable all students to develop critical thinking skills to successfully complete the task. In one math class, students were divided into three groups and each group completed three center activities on finding area and perimeter but not all students were challenged throughout all three tasks. In another math class, students worked with a partner but did not achieve the objective of the lesson. In an English language arts class students were in groups based upon ability to give peer feedback using reciprocal reading. Students were assigned roles. However the depth of discussions and individual student participation in discussion varied across groups. As a result of the inconsistent supports into

the curricula, the levels of participation and high level thinking were uneven, limiting student success.

- Refine the school's approach to culture building to ensure that students' voice is welcomed and valued and each student receives supports that align with the learning needs. (1.4)
 - The school utilizes a variety of systems to address and reward students' appropriate discipline and to cultivate a positive school culture. Section sheets are used to give each class a score of one to four to earn a "dress down" day. Additionally, "Loose Change, Big Money" is a program to give students positive points for actions such as participating, listening, remaining focused and negative points for calling out, interrupting or failure to listen. These points are then used to determine students' overall grade and the tracker gets signed weekly by a parent or guardian. The school has a red, yellow, green student recognition program for deserved privileges based on academic and behavioral achievement every two weeks. If "green", students earn privileges such as going outdoors to lunch daily and are eligible for school events or trips. In class visits, students receive a "plus one P" for participation but showed little effect on getting other students to participate. Although the systems are meant to increase student discipline and encourage effective personal behaviors students state that they have difficulty getting "green". Students were also unable to give examples of how they contribute to decisions or how they can share their thoughts about something in school. As a result, these programs are inconsistent in the ability to improve students' behavior or create a culture where student voice is welcomed.
 - Structures are in place to address students' social-emotional needs. The school holds Pupil Personnel Team meetings to address the needs of students that are referred. Teachers need to document the Tier I and Tier II interventions that have been provided. However, the principal states that the number of referrals has declined as a result of the protocols that need to be followed. The school has set up "Graduation Guardians" for all students in which an adult is responsible for up to ten students and oversee their social, emotional, and academic well-being. Students are encouraged to seek out their Guardian. However, students state that they do not have a relationship with their Guardian and they rarely check-in with them. Students feel that the Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialist, SAPIS worker, is very supportive and helps them address their problems. As a result of the inconsistent supports, not all students are well known by an adult, limiting students' learning and social-emotional needs being met.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: M.S. 256 Academic & Athletic Excellence	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