

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

The New Preparatory Middle School

Middle School 008

**108-35 167th Street
Queens,
NY, 11433**

Principal: Angela Green

Dates of review: June 3 - 4, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.- Gorski

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The New Middle Preparatory is a middle school with 666 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 60% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, 4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leadership makes organizational decisions and uses key resources to support instructional goals and foster student progress. (1.3)
 - The core and school leadership teams, which include the principal, assistant principals, parents, and teachers, identify school priorities via a school needs assessment to make informed decisions. For example, student State data results, school survey, teacher observations, and school goals, inform decisions to purchase supplementary materials, design extended programs, staff assignments, partnerships, and student groups. A strong partnership between the Queens Department of Probation and the Young Men's Initiative (YMI) promotes positive, personal behaviors to address social-emotional and academic progress of male students most at-risk of not meeting standards. Most recently, students in the YMI participated in a full day of workshops at the Queens Department of Probation enabling them to meet with numerous divisions of the agency to learn critical attributes of possible careers within the criminal justice system. Moreover, the school budget is used to focus on instructional programs aligned to student progress, such as formal computer-based technology programs providing supplementary learning via focused interventions that yield student data relative to performance and progress. For example, one after school program includes specific English as second language strategies and focuses on Level 1 students scoring below grade level. Leadership schedules teacher teams to meet weekly to examine student work, discuss trends and patterns noted, and share responsibilities on planning activities for manageable student groups. In addition, the purchase of an online professional development program affords all teachers opportunities to further their growth by means of professional videos. Consequently, school decision-making supports instructional programs and school goals, builds student self-esteem and leadership skills, and broadens student experiences around future career possibilities, resulting in a positive culture to improve instruction and engage students in challenging tasks.
- The school draws from a set of goals to leverage change and increase teacher development that drives efforts to improve student learning and support social-emotional growth. (3.1)
 - School goals designed with the school leadership team (SLT) ensure that all constituencies have access to a transparent list of purposeful and applicable objectives. One school goal geared at teacher development to strengthen instructional practices is driven from teacher observations, seeing this as a way to increase student progress. Linked to teacher goals are students goals designed with their teachers and monitored for progress on a weekly basis. Students also expressed a school goal that engages them in positive cultural activities, as evidenced by their role in student government that welcomes their contributions into the running of the school. They discuss pertinent issues such as the anti-bullying campaign launched to create safe zones in the school, known as, "Blue

light". Additionally, both the Young Men's Initiative (YMI) and the Girls Empowered and Motivated to succeed (GEMS) are programs aligned to school goals and focus on boys and girls and their distinct needs. They meet weekly, thus allowing students to be supported by key school staff in building self-esteem, developing leadership skills, while enhancing their social and emotional development.

- Individualized teacher goals align to school goals regarding professional development, are reinforced via observations and 'stop and jots', while one-on-one conversations contribute to Individual Improvement Plans (IIP). Teachers then use the feedback to develop next steps toward instructional improvements and meeting their goals. School leaders also ensure that throughout the school year families are directly involved in school matters by way of meetings and parent workshops hosted by the parent coordinator. Parents expressed that they have seen a real change in instruction supported by school partnerships, investments in academic programs, improved teaching methods, and strategies. Parents highlighted the computer-based program as a positive choice because their children are able to gain access to their work at home and parents are able to support their children and learn together. Parents also reference a school monthly newsletter, *Up to Date with M.S.8* that allows them to obtain updates of school initiatives and progress toward achieving instructional goals. Thus, leadership's walk-through activities of classroom sessions that involve network support, the school curriculum team, and the instructional lead teachers, contribute to monitoring progress toward meeting instructional goals and informing next steps to sustain school improvement efforts.
- School leaders support teacher growth via an observation process that encourages professional development opportunities and increases teacher capacity. (4.1)
 - Leadership, along with a teacher who is National Board Certified (NBCT), and the Core Leadership Team (CLT), worked to design the school professional development plan. In addition, a teacher survey informs teacher support and carves out content for individualized common needs, and strengths. The school references this professional development plan as, *Connected and Focused with a Purpose*. Additionally, teacher data growth reports are generated to provide information relative to the impact of the professional development and the meeting of goals as set forth in teacher's Individualized Improvement Plans (IIPs), which are aligned to the Danielson Teaching Framework. Furthermore, leadership measures growth towards the school's selected competencies of focus via short, frequent cycles of classroom observations, "Stop and Jots", and provides immediate feedback to teachers indicating commendations and next steps. Professional learning communities encourage pedagogical reflections enabling teachers to make informed instructional decisions and differentiate their growth by using an on-line system of tailored individualized training. Following an observation, teachers have opportunities to watch classroom videos in pedagogical content areas recommended by the observing supervisor. Additionally, teachers who wish to further develop their knowledge in specific areas may select from a menu of videos. Moreover, the school provides flexibility in the school schedule to afford teachers further opportunities for staff development. For example, lead teachers hold, 'lunch and learns', and turnkey sessions

to share best practices, and to conduct SMART board and bookmaking training. A pacing calendar guides the school through professional sessions that set instructional expectations for all teachers and supports teacher development.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that Common Core aligned units and instructional shifts integrate engaging tasks for all students including relevant subgroups to emphasize deep reasoning that promote higher-order skills. (1.1)
 - School staff gathered additional CCLS aligned tasks and specific rubrics used to modify tasks from Engage New York, a New York State web site. Teachers meet twice weekly during grade or subject specific common planning sessions, or additionally during interdisciplinary team meetings to discuss Citywide Expectations, performance tasks, plan lessons, instructional adjustments, and share strategies. An example of a performance task includes a learning objective, reference to CCLS, a focus question, vocabulary, mini-lesson, and a teacher model of questions. Teacher teams work on unit adjustments and instructional pacing to align with student needs and instructional implications. However, across the school emphasis of strategies in academic tasks that prompt students into conceptual, higher-order thinking varied. While units follow the Understanding by Design (UBD) model, learning scaffolds to expand discussions are inconsistently included in units of study. Across grades written plans show limited engaging and challenging lessons. Additionally, specific strategies designed to facilitate comprehension for second language learners and students with disabilities were sporadically embedded in the units or plans. For example, teachers design math tasks indicating a rationale described as follows: students are grouped by common levels so that all Level 1 students through Level 4 students are grouped solely based on their scoring. This form of grouping does not provide opportunities for students to work with peers at other levels. Yet, some teachers designed math tasks and groups so that students work on computers for visual assistance and others assignments require verbal explanations. One group would solve a word problem and explain how the answer was determined, and one group would use a combination of modalities to resolve a problem and show all calculations on a task sheet. Thus, some students are offered opportunities to engage in deep reasoning in numerous ways. As a result, scaffolds that build on deep reasoning and provide opportunities for all students to build their learning are not yet school-wide practice, hindering students, especially relevant subgroups, from engaging in higher-order thinking skills and meeting grade-level standards.
- Deepen the school's collective set of beliefs about how students learn best in order to regularly include entry points and strategies that support curricula accessibility across classrooms for all students. (1.2)
 - The school has adopted the Danielson Framework as guidance toward meeting an instructional goal directed at teacher development with emphases on planning coherent instruction, questioning, and discussion, engaging students in learning, and using assessments in instruction. To

support this work, the school belief of how students learn best stresses the use of technology, cooperative learning groups, vocabulary word walls, writing strategies, such as, evidence-based claims (EBC) and use of student data from program-based data sources to inform instruction. However, during classroom visits, questioning techniques mostly produced low-level questions with one-word student responses. In one sixth-grade class the teacher asked, "Technology is a part of our everyday life! Do we agree or disagree?" In a choral reply students said, "We disagree!" Moreover, the majority of groupings were designed to be rotational so that every student eventually visited each workstation. While some students worked on laptops in the back of the classroom taking a test, the rest of the class was working on a whole class lesson, thus missing out on purposefully grouping students for differentiated instruction. Furthermore, teachers use the SMART board as a white board or to project lessons, but it was not evident that it is used to interactively engage students in lessons. Teachers also expressed that they were just starting Common Core work and finding the work rigorous prompted them to create hands-on lessons and infuse technology in lessons, which are now developing, resulting in inconsistent outcomes across the school and hindering opportunities for all students including relevant subgroups to engage in thought-provoking tasks and appropriate points of access.

- Refine the use of common assessments to align to the school's key standards so that teachers provide actionable feedback to students toward meeting goals and use data results to make instructional adjustments. (2.2)
 - The school uses baseline and unit assessments and Acuity Interim assessments to generate data to inform instruction. A teacher leader provides teachers with monthly student data results from an online adaptive program that adjusts instruction to student levels of progress. The school also uses Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) to obtain student information. Teachers use data outcomes to inform student conferences and develop student goals. Project-based tasks and specific rubrics also engage students in common core aligned tasks. However, during classroom visits student portfolios and goals' folders inconsistently held records of student results, actionable feedback, and next steps. In one classroom, folders reviewed included a goals sheet that showed student work as, "the scientific method review", strategies completed read, "labs from start to finish", action plan, stated, "attend extra help, ask a classmate or teacher for help, proofread, practice and study." Specific feedback tailored to individual students was unevenly found in student portfolios. This pattern was noted in most classrooms where essays had limited feedback via post-its or on the goal sheet. During student conversations, some students described feedback as not specific enough, or not about their individual needs. Other students articulated a clear understanding of their academic progress and how they track progress. While the school has a multitude of assessments, student results are inconsistently used across grades and subject areas, hindering teachers from making suitable instructional adjustments directly aligned to key standards, student goals, and providing effective feedback to all students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

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School name: The New Preparatory Middle School	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