

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The School of Diplomacy Middle School**

**11x370**

**3710 Barnes Avenue**

**Bronx**

**NY 10467**

**Principal: Sean Licata**

**Dates of review: May 1 -2, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Elizabeth A. White**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

The School of Diplomacy is a middle school with 395 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 65% Black, 30% Hispanic, 2% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 11% 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 89.3%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school effectively manages resources, time and talent to support instructional goals resulting in positive student outcomes. (1.3)

After-school per session opportunities for weekly teacher meeting time every Tuesday as well as the purchase of Common Core library materials and teacher selected texts supports the school's Common Core alignment goals and enables teachers to revamp curriculum, particularly in English Language Arts (ELA). In addition, partnerships with RAMAPO consultancy for professional development and C.H.A.N.C.E.S. mentor program to support at-risk students enhance teacher management practices and student self-monitoring behaviors that lead to academic success. For example, during close reading of juxtaposed articles groups of students were asked to identify the environmental impact of the manipulation of water supplies in Arizona and China. Students used a graphic organizer to record their responses and were able to engage successfully in the group tasks. ELA and professional development resources have resulted in a curriculum closely aligned to Common Core expectations and management practices that lead to meaningful student discussion and work products.
- The school accurately captures teacher effectiveness resulting in feedback that identifies critical attributes for improvement of pedagogical practice. (4.1)
  - The school's process for evaluation of instruction has evolved to align with their common framework for teaching practice. School leaders conduct data talks bi-monthly with individual teachers to review student outcomes on interim and formative assessments are conducted bi-monthly. Classroom observations are conducted regularly; each teacher has had at least three formative and one formal visit. Feedback from these observations and discussions accurately capture highlights and next steps for pedagogical improvement and support. For example, as a result of classroom visits and teacher discussions, the data specialist was assigned to work with the sixth grade team to elevate their use of Acuity data to inform instruction. These evaluative processes for teacher practice have led to clear expectations for effective pedagogy and analysis of teacher development needs resulting in continuous teacher self-reflection, development and support.
- The school utilizes protocols for evaluating school initiatives resulting in adjustments to ensure effective coherence of policies and practices. (5.1)
  - The administrative cabinet uses a curricular checking protocol to ensure that teacher teams are focused on ensuring that Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) are embedded in classroom tasks and lessons and met by students. This process has resulted in midyear adjustments to programming enabling team meeting time for science and social studies teachers to meet to promote success in the implementation of Common Core tasks in these subjects. In addition, the initial implementation of an eight period day allows for more instructional time allowing the students

more time on task in ELA and math. As a result of school-wide data review, this scheduling was supplemented by the reassignment of teachers to provide additional support for student learning. Both measures and evaluations have resulted in supporting efforts towards meeting standards across disciplines and have led to pedagogical supports for instruction.

## Areas for improvement

- Develop rigorous curricula that provide consistent access across subjects to meet the needs of all learners. (1.1)
  - The school has concentrated its efforts on embedding Common Core standards into curriculum and has worked on implementing aligned assessment tasks. However these efforts are mostly evident in ELA. Curriculum development efforts for science and social studies departments began recently. In addition, curricular documents in all subjects do not yet address instructional considerations for special populations such as English language learners (ELL) or students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP). Content curricula have yet to be fully implemented because it is still being revised to align with the expectations of Common Core standards. This has resulted in a lack of rigor and explicit modifications in all curricula and lesson plans. In addition, the school's ability to perform a gap analysis is hindered. These factors limit engagement and successful access to curricula especially for struggling populations.
- Improve teacher practice to foster academically rigorous instruction that effectively engages all learners. (1.2)
  - While in most classrooms student participation is high, the lack of support to match the challenge of lessons limits active student engagement. For example, during a math lesson, the 'do now' motivational task asked students to determine which scenario would earn them the most money given a specific monetary amount for a day, a week or a month. Students had to identify the operations and strategies they would need to determine their answer. Many IEP students had difficulty in how to begin. The teacher remained with one student for most of the time. During the review of the do now assignment he focused on calling on two students. Others passively copied what was written on the board. This lasted for half of the period. The lack of support led to student disengagement in attempting to solve the problem resulting in the unsuccessful completion of student work products.
  - Likewise, student interaction leading to rich student-to-student discussions and successful completion of group tasks is limited. For instance, in a public speaking class students were listing the activities they engage in during the school day. Following an extended teacher-led discussion and read aloud, students were asked to work in groups to discuss and identify reasons for and against the extension of the school day. However, a minimal amount of time was given for student group work. In addition, students were not given the text referred to by the teacher to engage in deep text-based evidence citing. This resulted in limited contribution and an overreliance on the teacher to complete the

task. Both instances negatively impacted students' opportunity to complete their assigned tasks, thereby limiting access to content knowledge.

- Strengthen the use of on-going assessment practices across classrooms to modify instructional approaches as needed resulting in timely student supports. (2.2)
  - The school has made strides in administering common assessments across grades and subjects. Throughout the year all students experience grade and subject-specific tests including Acuity and teacher-made assessments. Currently, however, grading policies are inconsistent across grades and subjects particularly in math. In math policies from classroom to classroom differ across grades. This results in a limited ability to consistently monitor student achievement, minimizing actionable feedback to accurately identify trends across the school for teacher teams to adjust curriculum and instruction.
  - Similarly during lessons, assessment practices do not consistently reflect ongoing checks for understanding that enable students to successfully complete tasks. Adjustments made to scaffold support for student task completion is often limited. In an ELL classroom, for example, during a science lesson about the circulatory system, students were asked to use a diagram to identify where the blockage of the heart may lead to death based on their reading of a vocabulary dense text. 14 out of 17 students shaded incorrect areas. The lack of checking for understanding as well as sufficient language and vocabulary supports led to misconceptions which resulted in the unsuccessful completion of student work products.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The School of Diplomacy	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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 <b>inquiry approach</b> 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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>