



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Quality Review  
Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning  
2013-2014

# Quality Review Report 2013-2014

**Midwood**

**High School 405  
2839 Bedford Avenue  
Brooklyn  
NY 11210**

**Principal: Michael McDonnell**

**Dates of review: December 18 - 19, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Tamika Matheson**

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

### **Information about the school**

Midwood is a high school with 3,865 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 31% Black, 12% Hispanic, 23% White, and 33% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 92.8%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school ensures that students are engaged in rigorous curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and State content standards. (1.1)
  - In September, school leaders and staff continued to build upon integrating CCLS and the instructional shifts within curricula across disciplines and grades. Continued refinement of curriculum maps, based on formative and summative data, and connections to key Common Core and/or State standards, assures that instruction for students is engaging and appropriately challenging to support learning and college and career readiness. This was evidenced by Global History & Geography curriculum maps, and lesson and unit plans in Integrated Algebra, U.S History 1, English 3 and Chemistry. For example, science teachers embed research components throughout the curriculum and require students to create two research-based lab reports each year to support higher-order thinking skills and ready students to excel on Regents' examinations. As a result, science pass rates have steadily increased and rank in the 93% percentile Citywide (2013 High School Dashboard). Furthermore, the school's Criminal Law curriculum is VITEA/CTE approved and used by the Department of Education as an exemplar. Additionally, four courses: Advanced Robotics, Criminal Law, Anatomy and Physicality, and Forensics, are certified College Preparatory Courses. Thus students are challenged and cognitively engaged in all subjects across grades as evidenced by high levels of small group and whole class discussions, and by 89% of first year and second year students earning 10 or more credits and 83% of third year students earning 10 or more credits.
  
- School leaders make strategic organizational decisions that align to school goals, including the use of resources and student and teacher programming, to meet the needs of students and staff. (1.3)
  - The school's investment in an online grading system, Skedula, increases communication and transparency among teachers, parents, and students. By providing teachers with training, and school issued user-ids for students and parents, all constituents are able to use Skedula to monitor academic performance and to communicate via email. Therefore, students and families have timely access to student progress. The expanded use of technology across grades and content areas, as observed during class visits, enables teachers to integrate the use of Smart board and Nearpod technology in various lessons, and iPads are used for tutoring in science and math. Furthermore, students have access to technology throughout the school as evidenced by school computer labs, computers in the library, and iPads that students borrow. Additionally, the school purchased a social-emotional learning program for freshmen that will be incorporated into English language arts classes in the spring. The school also re-allocated funds from select administrative and clerical vacancies to purchase software licenses for the college office such as Naviance, Skedula to increase school-wide engagement and Eduware Wizard Testmaker for instructional support. As a result, student work products demonstrate higher order thinking and development of rigorous habits, 80% or more students pass entry level and/or required high school commencement

Regents' examinations, and 80% of teachers responded that they "have sufficient materials, equipment, and assistive technology in good condition to teach class(es)."

- The school strategically hires and programs faculty to teach students with disabilities (SWDs) and English language learners (ELLs). For example, teachers are hired with dual licenses in special education and content areas to teach subgroups. Last year, select English as a second language (ESL) teachers received training on Achieve 3000, literacy software, to implement in ESL classes. This year, an additional five teachers were trained to use Achieve 3000 with students with disabilities. Next year, the school will expand the use of Achieve 3000 to students in the lowest third. Furthermore, the school identified students at-risk of not accumulating 10 or more credits and school leaders created the Second Chance Academy, an after school program, for at-risk students in grade 9 to complete course work and retake exams to demonstrate mastery in a core area of study (ex. science, social studies, math or English) to earn course credit. Students earning a grade of 60 or lower on a unit exam are programmed for the Second Chance Academy. Additionally, the school plans to implement a Night program in the Spring, February through June, for students in grade 10 through grade 12, based on seniority, during which students may enroll in one full credit course. Courses will be programmed twice per week and during Spring break to meet New York State required instructional hours. School leaders use scholarship data to identify faculty to teach Second Chance Academy students. As a result of additional hires and academic intervention programs, there are increased opportunities for students to meet their personal goals with additional supports.
- The school's strong culture of respect, mutual trust, and inclusive environment, supports the academic success and social-emotional growth of students. (1.4)
  - The administration purchased a social emotional learning program for grade 9 students to introduce life skills. The course meets once per week, and includes icebreakers, skill building, conflict-resolution, responsible use of social media, and builds on student empathy. Additionally, all students receive academic planners that list higher order thinking skills based on the "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" that are used by students to record and monitor assignments, organize class schedules, and to customize extracurricular activities and events on the academic calendar. The school offers a broad range of sports and clubs focused on community service opportunities, ethnic, and religious diversity, sexual identity, and academic and political themes. Over 30% of the student body participates on a sports team, and 25% or more of the student body belong to one or more of the school's 51 clubs. Additionally, the school has an active student government organization (SGO) that consists of delegates from each grade level. The SGO meets regularly with the Coordinator of Student Activities and school leaders to share concerns and members participate in decision-making at the School Leadership Team level. As a result, school pride permeates throughout the school community, creating a safe learning environment that embraces cultural diversity and student voice.
  - The school expanded the use of Skedula to increase communication between students, families, and staff, and at the beginning of the school year teachers

received professional development on how to use Skedula to manage attendance, grades, and electronic correspondences. The school also uses Global Connect, a robo-call system to inform parents of important school announcements, lateness, and attendance. Global connect enables the school to call 4,000 homes in an hour. Additionally, a full time parent coordinator supports the parent teacher association and organizes monthly parent workshops on an array of themes, including CC shifts, academic requirements, and college and career readiness topics. Furthermore, guidance services are coordinated with the support of the Network, a full time school aide, and attendance teacher, to monitor and track attendance data. The guidance department shares and reviews a five day attendance roster monthly. Subsequently, home visits are conducted to target chronically absent students, and to provide guidance supports. As a result, the school consistently achieved attendance rates of 91% or higher over the last four years, and students shared how the staff “is always willing to help you do better,” how teachers have high academic-expectations, and how they are expected to attend college.

- The school designs assessments that capture student data and academic progress, so that teachers make effective adjustments to instruction and curricula. (2.2)
  - Teachers engage in the frequent use of rubrics, department grading policies, and formative and summative assessments to assess and monitor student achievement. Students stated that assignments and projects are accompanied by rubrics, and that teachers use rubrics to provide them with actionable next steps to improve their work. Additionally, as every department has a grading policy approved by an assistant principal, the science department, “with the understanding that all students aren’t starting at the same place,” modified its grading policy, resulting in science pass rates increasing from 68% to 75%. Furthermore, teachers check for understanding using varied techniques such as self-assessment, check-list, text slips, “stick picks” an educational app with questions aligned to Bloom’s Taxonomy, “3,2,1” a technique that has students sharing three things learned, two interesting things, and one question, and Depth of Knowledge questions as evidenced by class visits, lesson plans, and teacher and student meetings. The school has a daily homework policy, and expects teachers to administer unit exams. A majority of departments use common assessments to monitor and track student progress across content areas and grades. Additionally, teachers may administer multiple forms of assessments such as alternative assessments, projects, and presentations. Furthermore, departments generate and distribute assessment calendars with test days, and teachers are notified of all student-testing modifications. Teacher teams review common assessment data and student progress toward goals. For example, math teachers analyze Algebra 1 Term 1 and Algebra 1 Term 3 uniform assessments to identify skills, concepts and content to re-teach. Meanwhile, a common planning team analyzes assessment data to identify and teach study skills outlined in a team designed study packet. To that end, across classrooms teachers provide students with actionable feedback, and collect and analyze assessment findings to adjust instructional practices to positively impact student achievement.

## What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen teaching practices aligned to curricula to meet the instructional needs of all students including English Language learners and students with disabilities. (1.2)
  - The school has well defined rigorous curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards across content areas and grade levels. Across classrooms teachers infuse technology, implement small group instruction, scaffold questions based on Depth of Knowledge, embed rigorous content within instruction, and engage students in “real-world” application. Furthermore, academic intervention services such as Achieve 3000, and curricula redesign efforts are in place to address the needs of various subgroups. However, across the vast majority of classrooms teachers have yet to strategically employ high quality supports such as lesson modifications and extensions into the curricula at the level of depth to universally engage various subgroups such as English language learners and students with disabilities in challenging tasks to foster higher order thinking skills. As a result, although students in subgroups outperform graduation rates of their peers citywide and in the borough, they fall below their counterparts in the school’s peer group as evidenced by the 2013 dashboard data whereas students with individualized education plans graduate in the 17<sup>th</sup> percentile, and Black and Latino males graduate in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile.
- Further expand the use of Danielson to drive instructional shifts by engaging teachers in professional supports aligned to school wide and individual professional goals to impact pedagogy and student achievement. (4.1)
  - Cycles of observations by administrators focus on deliberately selected competencies, such as tiered questioning, assessments, and the integration of technology to deepen student learning. Ninety percent of the school’s 175 teachers chose Option 1 for teacher evaluation. School leaders provide actionable feedback and instructional supports for every ineffective and developing component. For example, feedback to teachers include embed “multiple entry level questions for class work [to] help you quickly assess for understanding,” “When posting questions on the board differentiate between students,” “ ...encourage peer assessment” and “Design assessment points within the lesson plan for ongoing assessments to ensure that students are grasping important concepts.” Additionally, teachers in the majority of classes visited grouped students and integrated technology. The principal and assistant principals collect, track and share observation data using an Excel spreadsheet in google.doc. Furthermore, school leaders use teacher observation data to determine supports early in the school year for a seasoned teacher who received ineffective and developing in select competencies. The assistant principal scheduled weekly check-ins to monitor and adjust supports. Every month, three hours of professional development is devoted to norming teacher effectiveness, and strengthening the school wide understanding of Danielson. The school developed an “Instructional Rounds Record” tool for observing instruction, and teacher teams visit classes using a Danielson observation worksheet to share feedback. Subsequently, staff and school leaders discussed how Danielson augmented the level of discourse during pre-observation and post-observation meetings. However, in spite of these efforts the school does not yet have a full complement of teacher peer supports to further strengthen

teacher effectiveness and help each staff member attain their professional goals and align all instruction to the Danielson framework Thus, the impact of Danielson on professional growth is uneven across the school.

.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Midwood High School	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			<b>X</b>				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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 supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			<b>X</b>				
<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 student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>				
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?			<b>X</b>				
<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>

