

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Middle School 582

K582

**207 Bushwick Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11206**

Principal: Brian Walsh

Dates of review: November 12, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Alicja Winnicki

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 582 is a middle school with 291 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 25% Black, 73% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 90.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school leaders and teachers strategically plan and align curricula with the Common Core Learning Standards resulting in rigorous academic tasks for all students preparing them for college and careers. (1.1)
 - The school implements two programs recommended by the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) in English language arts and math that are fully aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate instructional shifts, embedded in curriculum and lesson plans, such as a balance of informational and literary text, close reading, academic vocabulary, text evidence, and deep understanding and problem solving. A review of curriculum artifacts revealed that individual teachers, teacher teams and school leaders use these programs, the Scholastic Code X and the Pearson Connected Math Program 3, to build and ensure planning coherence across the grades and subjects. For example, all teachers we visited taught academic vocabulary and purposefully emphasized reading closely by structuring content specific word walls and by providing students with four steps to close reading like finding and collecting evidence. Lesson and unit plans also include essential questions, vocabulary, and reading closely, planned for distinct groups, including English language learners, students with disabilities and high performing students, thus providing all learners with access to the curricula. A science lesson plan, for example, lists a video and pictures associated with words and concepts taught to facilitate access for English language learners while an English language arts lesson plan incorporates more complex text and extended questions for high achievers. Likewise, individual plans consistently contain teaching points and learning targets that enclose high order skills, rooted in, "I Can" statements, like "I can apply the properties of integer exponents to generate equivalent expressions", or "I can analyze the relationship between setting and the character's conflict." Furthermore, the school's instructional focus to increase student writing skills promotes college and career readiness in all subjects across grade levels as evident in content curriculum maps leading to intentional planning of writing tasks and units by all teachers, including a physical education instructor. Moreover, curriculum maps and tasks deliberately include multiple opportunities to write across subjects as it is demonstrated in a strategic infusion of the writing workshop in all reviewed English language arts units and as evident in student work products in social studies, science, and career readiness classes. As a result, all students, including students with disabilities in general education and special education classes, are provided with multiple opportunities to experience rigorous tasks in standards based curricula. In addition, they demonstrate improved writing skills needed for college and careers as evidenced in two completed portfolio tasks in all grades.
- The administration effectively uses the Danielson Framework for Teaching to support teacher development with targeted feedback, increasing the level of pedagogy and student growth. (4.1)

- The principal and two assistant principals follow a purposefully crafted schedule of six short feedback observations. They also provide teachers with regular professional development opportunities, building on the last year's participation in the Teacher Effectiveness Pilot Program. For example teachers have opportunities to meet every Monday to discuss instructional practices, the Danielson Framework, and student work, thus leading to collegial feedback and improved teaching. The administration also used the initial planning conferences with teachers for a reflection and goal setting opportunity. Hence, all teachers reflected on their strengths and areas for growth, and listed next steps for their priorities as evidenced on the reviewed teacher self-assessment forms. Teachers also say they receive prompt and actionable feedback they can apply to improve their instruction and that the school-wide work and professional development provide common language about instruction. The school leaders use teacher observation feedback forms they developed to solidify their comments and to target pedagogical growth, specifically in grouping of students, the implementation of the Depth of Knowledge for questioning, or recommending intervisitations centered on class procedures. As a result, the entire faculty has common understanding of pedagogical expectations for effective practice and next steps. Furthermore, teachers have opportunities to visit each other's classrooms and then debrief about teaching strategies. Teacher-mentors, in addition to the administration, provide regular support and feedback for new colleagues. Moreover, school leaders engage teachers in looking at student work and offer ongoing feedback in planning and student achievement on tasks. The principal also supports teachers as leaders. For example, the newly hired assistant principal was a teacher and a staff developer and currently several teachers are taking leadership roles in teacher teams for planning, environment, and other initiatives. As a result of this transparent system of evaluation, all teachers know clear instructional expectations and have opportunities to apply specific feedback they regularly receive, thus improving their practice in a self-reflective and collaborative manner. Likewise, these processes have led to improved student work results, evident especially in student writing and demonstrated skills and strategies for close reading.
- The school leaders regularly review and evaluate curricular, instructional and organizational practices ensuring coherent approaches to the implementation of the standards and improved student learning and school culture. (5.1)
 - The leadership and teachers meet regularly in teams to discuss the new curricula and make necessary adjustments based on identified student needs and gaps from standardized and benchmark assessment results and evident in teacher team meeting agendas. They consistently monitor student growth in writing by using rubrics and by examining student work in notebooks. Moreover, the school leaders collect student writing notebooks and monitor student growth towards standards, and teacher assessment and feedback, using a school-based tool called a pedagogical rubric for notebook evaluation. Similarly, the school leaders review lesson and unit plans on an ongoing weekly basis and provide actionable feedback aligned with the components for planning and preparation from Domain 1 of the Danielson Framework, in addition to regularly scheduled lesson observations. As a result, all teachers and leaders are engaged in ongoing evaluation and adjustments of curricular

and instructional practices, based on identified student needs, and leading to increased understanding of the expectations of the CCLS.

- The principal sets high expectations for academic achievement, instruction, and respectful and inclusive school tone and he regularly shares them with the school community through various meetings, teams, committees, and newsletters. Furthermore, the school publishes its expectations in the parent, student, and staff handbooks that include promotional criteria and school policies. The school leaders also regularly seek feedback from the students, the faculty and the families about the school improvement plans, in addition to gathering and analyzing relevant data to make adjustments in school culture and relevant student services. As a result of this thoughtful process, the school has launched the College and Career Readiness program and the weekly advisory program, and adjusted their practice of communicating with families by implementing the web-based Engrade program allowing students and families to monitor academic achievement towards meeting the academic goals.
- The school deliberately aligns its resources with school goals and structures purposeful schedules, resulting in continuous support for professional collaboration and improvement of instruction. (1.3)
 - The school's vision is to increase academic rigor and promote college and career readiness across grades in an inclusive environment conducive to learning. Administrators strategically align the budget and pursue various grants to provide all students with enhanced curricula and opportunities to develop life-long skills needed to compete in the 21st century job market. For example, a new College and Career Readiness cluster program teaches students in grades 6 and 7 how to conduct research and use multiple sources, while all 8th grade students participate in preparation for a high school by learning about an application process and gaining skills on how to make good decisions determining their future. Likewise, all students participate in a weekly small group, gender-based advisory period, built in to teacher and student schedules. Currently, teachers are guiding students in goal setting. One of the assistant principals is spearheading the advisory curriculum this year and provides all teachers with support in planning for lessons with strategies around character education, thus supporting the school's improvement efforts. Similarly, the leadership strategically utilizes the 21st Century grant for partnerships to provide students with ample opportunities to participate in self-esteem building programs such as Shades of Beauty, Hip-Hop for Life, or Story Studio for English language learners. The principal has also formed a professional partnership with The Center for Integrated Teacher Education (CITE). The consultants work with teachers on improvement of questioning and discussion techniques, thus leading to increased opportunities for the students to participate in group discussions. The principal also hired additional teachers to extend instructional periods for literacy and to strengthen efforts towards meeting school goals. These initiatives are increasing learning opportunities and supports to the academic programs for all learners. Furthermore, all students have already published two performance based tasks in writing, an informational essay and a personal narrative, as evident in their portfolios.

- Departmentalized teacher teams, vertical and horizontal, meet regularly during commonly scheduled time and are deliberately structured around professional agendas focusing on instruction and assessment. For example, teachers of social studies and science analyze baseline assessments results and student work, thus aligning their next steps with the school's instructional goals. Similarly, English language arts and math teachers plan and revise units of study and academic tasks in alignment with the CCLS and the instructional shifts. Additionally, teams called, Professional Learning Communities meet weekly to specifically work on the understanding and implementation of the Danielson Framework. Moreover, teachers can choose to work in several committees: teacher development and evaluation, school environment, or attendance improvement teams. As a result, teachers have a multitude of professional occasions to work collaboratively with colleagues and the leadership, and their time is maximized to improve instructional work leading to engaging all students in challenging academic tasks such as multi-step problem solving, or organizing ideas and gathering research evidence for essays about the future of education.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance instructional practices across classrooms to ensure that diverse students are consistently provided with multiple opportunities to participate in discussions and demonstrate higher order thinking skills. (1.2)
 - Across classrooms teachers are beginning to group students for discussions and use high order questioning techniques in lessons. In some classrooms we visited, students worked in groups or partnerships and discussed tasks. For example, in several classes we heard students discussing answers to text-based questions or solving math problems in groups. In one class, all students were discussing an argumentative text by using accountable talk prompts featured on their desks and identified students were provided with graphic organizers and leveled articles. In another class, groups of students discussed how to apply properties of operations to exponential expressions and used visual vocabulary charts to help them with mathematical concepts. However, in a few classrooms, students answered questions asked only by a teacher or worked individually on a task. Similarly, we saw charts with leveled questions from the Depth of Knowledge posted in all classrooms and some teachers asked open-ended questions. As a result, although most teachers engage students in discussion, the use of higher-order questions and problems for students to discuss varies across classrooms, thus limiting student acceleration for learning.
- Provide support to teachers in assessment practices, the use of common assessments, and checks for understanding in order to strengthen student mastery toward their next learning goals. (2.2)
 - The school collects and analyzes student achievement data from multiple assessments and presents it to content and grade level teachers. Across grade levels, teachers use standards-based rubrics to assess writing and problem solving and to give next steps for all learners. Additionally, all teachers administer unit assessments, create pre- and mid-unit assessments and embed performance tasks in lessons. As a

result, most teachers use student data to adjust lessons and set next instructional steps. Furthermore, teachers use data tracking forms for monitoring student growth towards standards and skills from analysis of these assessments. For example, social studies teachers track individual students' achievement and outline next steps in reading informational text and citing textual evidence. Similarly, in all classrooms we visited students filled out exit slips at the end of each lesson. Even though these efforts are leading to the next instructional steps, the use of checks for understanding and student-self-assessment results do not always lead to progress monitoring towards individual or group goals, thus not providing all students with opportunities to master learning strategies.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: K582, Middle School 582	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 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?				X			
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?		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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 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?			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