

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

M.S. 131

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 02M131

**100 HESTER STREET
MANHATTAN
NY, 10002**

Principal: PHYLLIS TAM

**Dates of review: Mar 25-26, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 131 is a Middle School with 445 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 10% Black, 15% Hispanic, 0% White, and 75% Asian students. The student body includes 45% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has put support structures in place to create a safe and inclusive school culture leading to the adoption of effective academic and personal behaviors by students. (1.4)
 - The school grounds its approach to school culture in “respect.” Through action and messaging the school emphasizes the importance of respect among all members of the school community. Classroom environments and common meeting areas evidence respectful academic and personal conversations among teachers and students. The school has a Student Government Organization (SGO) through which students plan social and charitable events for the community. Students referenced Open Ears and the advisory program which are the processes through which students are able engage in conversation with school staff and influence school structure. Student testimony supports that students feel that what is brought to the attention of administration would be implemented if reasonable. Student voice is strategically embedded in the school systems and structures and has led to school improvement efforts related to academics and culture. The online journalism club, academic support groups, and various safety initiatives are a result of student voice.
 - M 131 partners with the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) to support students and their families by extending academic and behavioral supports. Embedded in the school schedule are weekly opportunities for parents to meet with their child’s cohort of teachers around academic and social development. Students are supported in leading parent-teacher conferences around their performance. The Response to Intervention Team includes the Social Worker, Psychologist, Guidance Counselor, Coordinator of Student Services (COSA), school administration and CBO partners when appropriate. The team supports teachers in providing Tier I supports and monitoring for results. The school includes a parental component as well and increases supports for families as the need for student supports increase. The team also trains students in peer mediation strategies and partners with the YMCA when services required are beyond what the school can provide. These structures along with the advisory component for students ensure students are know well, supported and adopt positive academic and personal behaviors. Such behaviors were evident across classrooms and in student groups.
- School leaders support teacher development with frequent cycles of observation, feedback and support aligned to professional goals that lead to improvements in teacher practice. (4.1)
 - The school uses teacher evaluation data to provide effective feedback to teachers that strengthens teacher practice. School staff has utilized talent coaches and on-line learning materials to develop a deep and normed understanding of the expectations for teaching grounded in the Danielson Framework. Instructional leadership develops school goals for curriculum and instruction based on quantitative and qualitative data from the previous year. These goals are shared and discussed school-wide. At initial planning conferences, teachers develop personal goals tied to school goals that strengthen their planning and practice with the end goal of improving student progress. For example, several teachers identified a need to improve their effectiveness in utilizing collected data while a group of newer teachers requested support in developing systems for data collection. Teachers

received support in their development through professional development small group sessions led by coaches and staff. Professional development included co-planning, the use of protocols to look at student work and inter-visitations to see formative assessment in practice. Through frequent cycles of observation and feedback and regular collaborative professional forums, administration supports teachers in progressing towards the effective implementation of best practices and the achievement of student performance goals. Google docs shared by instructional leads demonstrate the path of individual teachers that includes support plans and noted progress. The teachers referenced above received observational feedback related to their implementation of checks for understanding and had flexible grouping as identified next steps. The work of the instructional team and teacher teams has resulted in improved teacher practice as evidenced by effectiveness ratings in the planning and assessment domains.

- School leaders support teachers in creating Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned curricula that integrate the instructional shifts resulting in rigorous academic tasks accessible to all students. (1.1)
 - The school adapts CCLS aligned curricula to ensure all students are given access to rigorous learning activities. M 131 has been using Connected Math Project Mathematics curricula for a number of years, follows a balanced literacy program for English language arts and uses scope and sequence for content area curricula. School teams initially participate in a Planning Palooza each spring and summer, supported by the Children's First Network team. Grade level and content area teams have regular weekly planning sessions throughout the year where they update units and plans based on student performance data. Content area planning ensures literacy skills are integrated across contents. Lesson plans demonstrate that all learning targets, across grades and content, are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. For example, an 8th grade Social Studies unit calls for students to support a conclusive analysis of primary and secondary source review, citing specific text evidence. Students must also be able to present and support their analysis in discussions with their peers as well as discuss forms of text presentation. A lesson plan within this unit asks students to take a position on the democratic structures of Athens and Sparta and present to a peer. In preparing their presentation, students were supported with organizers on which they could collect information and plan their argument. Students were able to access information in a variety of forms including leveled text and web exploration. Collaborative planning opportunities and professional development in Universal Design for Learning (UDL) lead instructional coherence and student access to rigorous content.
- School community members consistently communicate high expectations for practice, progress and performance resulting in a shared accountability for student success. (3.4)
 - School leaders hold initial planning conferences with teachers to set goals aligned with school goals and grounded in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders use observation data to inform whole school, team and individual professional development. Team meetings are another forum whereby teachers are supported in instructional and curricula decision making. Teachers often lead grade and content team meetings, as well as instructional coaches. Meetings center around school goals and teacher meetings observed focused on using student work to inform teacher practice. Administration participates in team meetings and collects feedback from staff

around instructional matters. Administration and instructional leads share and monitor observational data and support plans on Google docs and discuss at regular meetings. Teachers are given ongoing feedback formally and informally. After the identification, planning and support phases, administration conducts additional observations to assess the level of effectiveness in implementation of instructional decisions and improvements resulting in a culture of high expectations coupled with high support.

- School staff has structures in place to support students and their families along the path to college and career readiness. The school offers regents classes in both science and mathematics so that students can earn high school credit and advance their studies. Preparation courses for these exams are offered not only to students who excel in academics but also to students who demonstrate interest and commitment. The school holds regular meetings with families around student progress and has recently piloted student led parent-teacher conferences with 6th grade students which has increased family attendance and promoted student-parent discussions around expectations and achievement. Parents have weekly access to their child's cohort of teachers and have regular access to student performance data through Engrade. This provides families with a clear understanding of academic expectations and their child's progress in meeting those expectations.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand the use of multiple entry points and differentiation strategies in order to increase cognitive engagement for all student groups. (1.2)
 - MS 131's student population comprises of 40% English language learners and 25% special education students. School staff has been trained in Universal Design for Learning and attends to giving students access to rigorous tasks by making adjustments to quantity, time, and levels of support within CCLS aligned lessons. Given that many students are in need of scaffolds and supports, scaffolding strategies are provided in a 'whole class' format. For example, in one English language arts class the teacher front loaded vocabulary for students prior to them listening to a poetry slam recording. The recording was then viewed three times with the teacher questioning student thinking and understanding in between each viewing. This prepared students to access work around the use of similes and metaphors in poetry. Chunking text, technology integration, audio-visual supports, graphic organizers and small group instruction was observed across classrooms. However, it was not evident that support and extensions were strategically being provided for students based on student performance thereby limiting student ownership and in some classes, the opportunity for students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.
- Refine systems around providing and actionable feedback to students across content areas so that students are aware of their next learning steps and demonstrate increased mastery. (2.2)
 - The school uses common assessments to track and monitor student performance against the "asks" of the instructional shifts and CCLS. Teachers use protocols to analyze student work and also use summative data to decide on instructional next steps for whole class and student groups. Teachers consistently use exit slips to assess student understanding on the day's lessons. While there was evidence of the use of rubrics to set instructional expectations, students stated that the rubrics were used primarily to determine

an overall grade and were unable to identify their next learning steps. In addition, feedback observed focused primarily on writing mechanics and conventions over task content, limiting student's ability to take ownership of their learning and effectively move towards mastery.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: M.S. 131	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	