

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Elizabeth Blackwell Middle School

J.H.S. 210Q

**93-11 101st Avenue
Ozone Park, Queens
NY 11416**

Principal: Rosalyn Allman-Manning

Dates of review: May20-21, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

JHS 210Q is a middle school with 1,947 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 7% Black, 60% Hispanic, 4% White, 28% Asian, 1% American Indian, and 0% unspecified students. The student body includes 13% English language learners and 14% 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 92%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Teachers strategically plan and refine units of study aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts that ensure engagement for all students and promote coherence across the school. (1.1)
 - Many resources are used to support the instructional goals of the school. The school purchased Code X, for English language arts (ELA) and Connected Math Program (CMP3) which are Common Core. For social studies and science, the school chose to utilize Common Core aligned units of study using New York City Department of Education core curriculum materials. Furthermore, teacher generated materials supplement the curricula and engage students in rigorous tasks as evidenced in classroom visits. The school strategically incorporates the instructional shifts across grades by requiring students to cite evidence, both verbally and in writing, through a balance of informational and literary texts. Specifically, units of study are built around the instructional shifts that require students to engage in rich and rigorous evidence-based conversations utilizing academic vocabulary. For example, as a warm up activity, students were asked to work with their learning partner and discuss their favorite plot of a book or movie. After “sharing out” they were asked to read a portion of “Wolf Kids”, identify its plot components to create their own imaginative narratives, via plot scaffolding. Students were introduced to the academic language pertinent to this activity and in addition they added their own dialogue, imagery and plot elements. This allowed the teacher to assist her students in moving to higher levels of comprehension and performance. The instructional and curricular coherence, as well as the integration of the instructional shifts observed, promotes college and career readiness for all students.
 - Teachers ensure that all learners are able to access curriculum through thoughtful collaborative planning based on reviewing student work and data. School leaders and the English language arts (ELA) and math coaches support teacher work to unpack findings in assessments. Based on the outcomes of authentic student work, staff adjusts and refines curricula to plan strategically in order to meet the needs of all students. For example, based on the units taught from their new curricula, the curriculum maps were adjusted to ensure adequate time is allocated for each unit of study. Furthermore, according to individual proficiency relative to differentiated tasks and texts, lesson plans include student groupings. For example, in a 6th grade history class, group work was differentiated in the plans according to “high, medium, and low” levels, permitting all students to engage in an appropriate task analyzing one of the three informational articles. Higher order skills are also evident in classes using the Socratic Seminar methodology. When asked, “How has Socratic Seminars affected your learning?” students responded “It helps me learn from my classmates” and “It helps students become more independent”. Students responded to pre-and-post surveys of their experiences with the Socratic Seminar. The post survey indicated that the opportunity to evaluate and provide feedback directly to classmates without teacher prompting during discussions increased 98% from rarely

to very often. In addition, classes using this methodology ensures rigor for all student sub-groups, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

- The principal makes deliberate and strategic decisions around the use of resources, scheduling, staff and partnerships, to support coherence of the instructional goals. (1.3)
 - The principal has effectively allocated funds to create full time English language arts (ELA) and math coaches to support all teachers in implementing “next steps” identified during classroom observations, resulting in effective instruction. One of the school’s instructional goals is to ensure that 100% of teachers possess a normed understanding of Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. Teachers attend professional development during the school day and afterschool led by administration and coaches. In addition, for the past three years, cohorts of teachers received coaching from Brienza, an outside vendor. The school also secured a “Reso A” grant enabling the infusion of technology in the classroom and online reading and writing programs with staff to support the integration into the curriculum. The school’s purchase of Code X provides the data as to which groups of students need support in citing textual evidence, another key priority. In addition, Unit 1 supports the NYCDOE initiative of college and career readiness skills as evidenced by students writing essays about different professions that interest them. To support this, the school introduced “career day” and planned college tours for 7th graders. Furthermore, “Dress for Success Day” was implemented and students wrote essays such as, “What Does it Mean to be Successful”. An extended day was created with a school-based option (SBO) vote to provide targeted students with extra help in improving their writing skills and engaging in critical thinking discussions. In addition, the school has two coaches, one teacher center specialist and a resource room provider to support teachers. There is also one full time attendance teacher and family worker who provide assistance to students with attendance issues (3.5%). During a collaborative team meeting, teachers stated that the new Code X curriculum has improved student writing as demonstrated in student work folders.
 - Deliberate, planned scheduling decisions ensure that teacher teams meet at least twice a week formally. One of the school’s goals is for teachers to demonstrate a normed understanding of the Danielson rubric and their identification of what highly effective teaching practices look like. To support this goal, targeted professional development is scheduled during the 50 minute inquiry period of Thursdays. In addition, teacher teams meet weekly with the support of an assistant principal and/or coach to share best practices, review student work, design academic tasks, rubrics, plan units of study with an emphasis on writing across all content areas and lesson plans that link to the school’s goal of engaging students in challenging tasks. During “House A” teacher team meeting, a teacher stated that “coaches help us to implement next steps identified during classroom observations, which has resulted in effective instruction across the school. Teachers stated they have “increased their involvement in the professional community by initiating dialogues with their colleagues regarding effective practices and sharing strategies to support all students with access to the curriculum.

- School leaders and staff work as a unified team to ensure a calm and respectful learning environment where the growth of students and staff is a priority. (1.4)
 - The school provides students with opportunities to actively participate in activities such as, Student Council, Socratic Circles and the School Leadership team (SLT). This gives students a voice in shaping school-wide decisions, promotes college and career readiness skills and bolsters their self-esteem, along with the development of leadership skills. Student council members are chosen by their classmates. In representing the student body, they chose to be involved with the Penny Harvest Foundation. To implement this initiative, students collected pennies, then researched different charities, debated the merits of each organization and ultimately decided which charity they wanted to support. In addition, the school is actively involved with Juvenile Diabetes and participates in the walk in Howard Beach. The Learning Environment Survey indicates, 90% of parents agree that the school creates a physically and emotionally secure environment in which everyone can focus on student learning. 87% of students agree they are safe in school and 83% agree there is a person that helps students resolve conflict. In addition, 87% of teachers feel that order and discipline are maintained, 95% of teachers agree that adults treat students with respect and 77% of students treat teachers with respect.
 - The school's advisory program enables every student to be well known by staff that helps support their academic and social growth. "Houses" were created to support the huge number of students and each is comprised of grades 6, 7 and 8. Each assistant principal knows their teachers and students well. Teachers in each House know the student from previous years. Students and parents appreciate that they can turn to teachers, related service providers and administrators to help resolve personal issues and concerns that might interfere with learning such as bullying or teasing. A review of attendance data reflects that currently for the 2013-2014 school year, the average daily attendance is at 93.5%, an increase of 1.5% from last year. In addition, during the Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS) team meeting, discussion centered on strategies teachers can use to engage and support students behaviorally. As a result, students report that they feel safe and are able to focus more on their academic development. Data from OORS and SWIS shows that by May, 2013, there were 160 level 4&5 incidents, 40 Principal Suspensions and 42 Superintendent Suspensions. Currently, there are 72 level 4&5 incidents, 31 Principal Suspensions and 12 Superintendent Suspensions. As evidenced by the data, the school has a safe environment and students actively have a voice in the decision making process.
- The administrative team and staff utilize Danielson's Framework for Teaching to ensure all teachers receive ongoing feedback with clear expectations of pedagogy that aligns with professional goals for teachers' growth. (4.1)
 - The principal has set forth highly clear expectations and provides ongoing support for teacher practices as needed that includes, but is not limited to, procedures and routines, curriculum and instruction. Teachers receive

training from the school's literacy and math coaches and for the past three year, from an outside vendor (Brienza) to support the understanding of the Danielson rubric, with a specific focus on Domain 2 (classroom environment) and Domain 3 (Instruction). Administrative observations, as well as inter-visitations, address evidence found during class visits including topics such as designing coherent instruction, using questioning and discussion techniques and using assessment in instruction. Administration received support from an Achievement Coach to assist in norming classroom observations with the Danielson rubric. Feedback to teachers clearly identifies strengths and challenges and provides actionable and targeted next steps to promote improvement. In addition, formal observations documents identify where observers saw teachers applying this feedback to their instructional practices. As a result, at the close of the 2012-2013 school year 10% of teachers were Ineffective, 3% were Developing, 82.4% were Effective and 3.5% were Highly Effective. Presently, as a result of this focus, 3% of teachers are Ineffective, 14% are Developing, 82.5% are Effective and 4% are Highly Effective.

- The principal and assistant principals visit classrooms daily so that all teachers receive frequent feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework on the effectiveness of their teaching, to support student outcomes. Most of the feedback is communicated immediately through private conferences between administrator and teacher where the two speak to the classroom snapshot, coupled with student work and data. As a result, both new and experienced teachers are strengthening their self-chosen goals. For example, following an observation at the beginning of the year, it was noted under 3b “the teacher’s questions of low cognitive challenge with single correct responses. The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking”. Observations are utilized to validate each teacher’s strengths and promote clear next steps with regard to designing coherent instruction, using assessments in instruction, as well as using questioning and discussion techniques effectively. During the next cycle of observations it was noted, “While the teacher may use some low-level questions, she also posed open-ended questions designed to promote student thinking and offer multiple possible answers”. Consequently, the principal uses this informal data, coupled with student work on the Common Core Learning Standards’ aligned tasks and on challenges and successes related to all students, including those with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and English language learners (ELLs). This data informs decisions for targeted professional development plans for teachers in need of support.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to enhance teacher questioning during the delivery of instruction in order to enrich student participation, thereby increasing opportunities to further develop critical thinking skills. (1.2)
- The school’s belief that students learn best when lessons are differentiated with multiple entry points and tasks that challenge learners for deeper thinking, is supported by collaborative planning during team meetings. During classroom visits, student directed conversations explaining their own ideas and using discussion to develop and expand their thinking was noted. Across most classrooms, teachers consistently

stated, "Tell me how you came to that answer". To ensure students assume ownership of their own learning, the school uses the workshop model providing students opportunities to engage in guided and independent practice. Students work in flexible small groups, are provided with supports and scaffolds such as graphic organizers, sentence stems and have multiple opportunities to practice new skills. During a social studies lesson, the whole class read an article presented on the SMARTboard about Egyptian life. Students then worked in small groups to respond to the essential question, "Why do you think the pyramids contained precious objects for the pharaohs, even though they were dead?" Each group shared their thoughts and was asked clarifying questions from the other groups. Although the school has provided professional development on Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and focused on the Danielson's competencies outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectation (CIE), across classes the level of questioning did not always lead to high levels of student thinking. For example, in some classrooms, teachers used basic recall questions, which did not give students opportunities to expand on concepts, thus limiting the level of discussion. As a result, some students were not challenged to meet high levels of thinking and engagement.

- Strengthen teachers' common assessment practices to monitor daily student progress in order to make instructional adjustments, offer clear next steps and provide more student self-assessment opportunities. (2.2)
 - It is evident that teachers celebrate students' best efforts through checkmarks and written comments and use this information to inform instruction. Teams of teachers meet weekly with grade level and content specific colleagues to analyze student work, assess effectiveness of instructional strategies that may be used across grades and subjects, and explore potential adjustments to upcoming lessons. Teacher teams use English language arts (ELA) and math item analysis information as well as baseline and interim assessment data to supplement summative data and identify student performance levels. Teacher's College reading assessment is administered to monitor and assess students' reading levels. In addition, pre-assessments for social studies and science were administered in the fall and teacher teams analyzed the results to inform their instruction for this school year. The principal indicated there is a plan in place for teachers to be trained in the scoring of the post assessments and analyze the results in preparation for next year's planning. Teachers have rich sources of data and use common practices such as turn and talk, exit slips, rubrics and conference notes. Rubrics are aligned to the school's curricula; however some rubrics are not uniform throughout the school. As a result, this limits some students' ownership of progress toward their next learning steps.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Elizabeth Blackwell 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 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