



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Academics, Performance, and Support
2013-2014**

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Magnet School for Civics in the Community

Middle School 230

**73-10 34th Avenue
Jackson Heights, Queens
NY 11372**

Principal: Sharon Terry

Dates of review: December 18-19, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.- Gorski

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Magnet School for Civics in the Community is a middle school with 997 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 50% Hispanic, 10% White, and 38% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012-2013 was 95.7%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well-developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Leadership and faculty implement common core aligned curricula, and instructional shifts, as reflected in data-driven academic tasks across grades and content areas, promoting college and career readiness for all students. (1.1)
 - The school continues its common core aligned curricula and key instructional shifts with support from the Teachers College Reading/Writing Project as the teaching model for their school. An item-analysis led the school to choose two key standards in English language arts to strengthen argumentative writing. Emphasis has been expanded to reading for information to determine central ideas, or themes of a text, its development, summary of key supporting details and ideas to delineate and evaluate the argument, and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning, and relevance of the evidence. Teachers also highlight the instructional shift of evaluation and analysis of challenging and complex text in all content areas. In math, the school has chosen to focus on standards that require students to use ratio and rate reasoning to solve real-world and math problems in grade 6. In grade 7 the school chose algebraic expressions and equations and in grade 8, the use of functions to model relationships between quantities. The school's strategic data-based instructional decisions, accompanied by teacher adaptations of curricula, result in coherence and provide conceptual support students need to deepen their thinking and become college and career ready.
 - Every unit prompts a pre-assessment to measure both individual and whole class status, and to inform curricula adjustments. Teachers then design mini-lessons, scaffolds, and access points in accordance with student needs. In English language arts, units embed Webb's' Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels via question scaffolds that prompt students into thinking about relevant content to cite in on-demand writing tasks to assure students use important text-based facts. A unit on research-based argument essays includes an essential question asking, "*How can we compose compelling evidence-based arguments to persuade an audience about urgent issues that affect us and others?*", thus, guiding students through gathering, evaluating, and integrating evidence to support their argument. Teachers choose a performance assessment task, a quick on-demand writing, or a flash draft writing, to monitor growth of individual and student groups to ensure that curricula refinements provide appropriate access for all students, including relevant subgroups. Additionally, they focus on deepening student reasoning across all subject areas as evidenced by student data analyses in English language arts, indicating a 79-percentile growth for students in the lowest third.
- Across classrooms, instructional practices reveal an established set of beliefs that deliberately afford all students access to curricula and provoke higher-order thinking skills via strategic supports and challenging tasks. (1.2)

- The school's belief on how students learn best through academic readiness is supported and enhanced by the Danielson Framework and is supported by teachers use of student data-analyses to understand their student's academic needs, thereby developing effective individual and group goals. Additionally, all lesson plans include a focus question, objective, and a goal for the lesson, academic vocabulary, an assessment, and the school-wide initiative to teach close reading via questioning and discussion to deepen students' understanding of analyzing and interpreting complex grade level texts. Teacher teams examine and discuss student work, and adjust lesson plans to include a variety of DOK levels of rigor, to make certain that strategies, such as, highlighting and underlining in close reading of a text, and that teacher practices, reflect the school's coherent approach to how students learn best and lessons meet student needs.

- Across classrooms teachers use strategies that guide students to independent work via high quality supports. A review of a continuum of work in student folders shows that all students self-reflect on their progress, indicating what they did well on, what they need to work on, and their next goal. In addition, scaffolds include a student note-taking chart to review steps of his/her own work, and checking to see if they have paraphrased, used academic or content area vocabulary and the author's idea or claim about a topic. Students also check for the use of cause and effect, and author's different points of view. Additionally, students use a graphic organizer that guides them to breakdown paragraphs with a claim sentence starter and sentence prompts to assist in getting started on writing each paragraph. Another graphic organizer includes open-ended questions to guide students through their writing, thus providing multiple ways in which they can demonstrate mastery. Some students may choose to use a search-and-find chart with the parts of a good essay on one side, and evidence from their essay on the other side. Students enter a claim, two or more reasons or examples, a title, and author, of the documents, quotes, and explanation of the quotes, a comparison of the documents, and a counter argument. Students also use a variety of strategies in a close read of text, such as annotations, highlights, and symbols, in order to select important information for their writing. Teachers partner students and provide discussion protocols so they support one another in their understanding of the text. Moreover, students use sentence stems, and rubrics via questions in group work, and self-assessments, to provide feedback to one another. An example noted during classroom visits was an eighth grade math lesson requiring students to solve problems using scientific notation in multiplication and division problems. To solve these problems students must make sense of the problem by using smaller problems as scaffolds leading to the final solution. Some students used guided questions to show their steps to solve the problem, while others used a diagram with cubic millimeters on one side and red blood cells on the other side of the diagram, and a strategy on making a table, and steps on how to convert the number of blood cells. Students in need of linguistic support use a slotting method and fill in blanks with numerical responses, pictures, and diagrams. Thus, teachers provide access to curricula, resulting in students engaged in challenging tasks that yield higher-order thinking skills demonstrated in student work products and on bulletin board displays.

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers attentively use common assessments to make instructional adjustments and gauge the school trajectory toward progress of student goals. (2.2)
 - A calendar at a glance maintains a focus of all staff relative to the design and delivery of assessments that is used on a regular basis to support student mastery. This guides staff as they use the assessment of questioning scaffolds during lessons to monitor and adjust their instruction, thus providing immediate and verbal feedback, and affording students opportunities to take ownership of their learning as they work toward mastery of content. Moreover, all teachers use STARS, a school-wide math and English language arts NYCDOE computerized program so that all teachers monitor student progress across the grades. Teachers enter grades onto a spreadsheet and can thus view rosters, access student data, and issue course marks, which will appear automatically on student report cards. Teachers also use curriculum rubrics to assess thematic project-based tasks, and student portfolios to evaluate student progress and make individual and group instructional adjustments. Furthermore, student groups are flexible and students are regularly reassessed and reassigned based on data. Similarly, student comprehension in content areas is measured via formative assessments using an end-of-unit study assessment to evaluate progress toward meeting goals for all students. The use of common assessments and instructional adjustments leads to all students demonstrating increased progress, thus providing a distinct representation of student achievement, as measured by the literacy bands assessments.
- School based decisions well support the instructional program as evidenced in student work. (1.3)
 - The school has arranged for teacher collaborations to meet five times per week to examine student work and discuss student data-analyses. Additionally, an instructional coach, also serving as the magnet coordinator, ensures that English language arts and content area teachers implement key standards, instructional goals, embed civics themes, and align lessons to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). The coaches' schedule is purposefully designed to afford all teachers support in instructional improvements so that rigorous activities to engage all students in deep reasoning is sustained, as evidenced in student portfolios showing dated progress in students' work.
 - The leadership has hired an external staff developer from Teachers' College to strengthen teacher pedagogy. The staff developer conducts professional development aligned to school wide goals, and student and teacher needs. Additionally, the school has hired a technology teacher to support teachers with its computerized grading and monitoring program, and systems of communication so that the entire community monitors student progress. Consequently, this results in all students, including relevant subgroups, receiving instruction and interventions that support their academic growth, addressing the closing of the achievement gap, and supporting students' path toward becoming college and career ready.

- Teacher Teams systematically monitor instructional practices via data analyses and student work and share in decisions to leverage student achievement across the school. (4.2)
 - Professional collaborations allow teachers to meet 3-5 times a week, and once during a weekly professional period. Teams meet across grades, and in what the school calls, blended teams to include grade and content area teachers. They utilize this time to assess student work, lesson plans, and create and evaluate common assessments. All teams use a 'Tuning Protocol', which includes team leaders astutely introducing and presenting the topic, asking clarifying questions, supporting teachers as they analyze student work, give cool and warm feedback, share a reflection, and then debrief. Teachers design tasks and interventions, with entry points for all students, including subgroups. During a team meeting, teachers discussed the writing of a former English language learner who also receives special education services, and who struggles with writing a clear and detailed counter-claim. The team's warm feedback depicted the student's ability to introduce a claim, and use a variety of reasons in the first paragraph. They further identified that, in the following paragraphs the student provided minimal details, restated, and ended the counterclaim with a statement reaffirming the claim. The team then offered cool feedback stating the student's need to elaborate, use stronger evidence, and use quotes from the text. During the debrief teachers suggested next steps, for both the team, and the student, including providing a checklist of steps needed to elaborate when writing a claim, which included quotes, elaborations, and a list of transitional terms. Thus, professional collaborations encourage coherence and strategic decision-making, support improving student achievement; helps build teacher leadership, and engage all staff in meaningful work.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the use of data systems to further ensure that all constituencies are informed and understand progress towards meeting school goals, to support school improvement plans and contribute to decision-making processes. (3.1)
 - The school's instructional set of goals is monitored using multiple data systems, including Achievement Reporting and Innovation system (ARIS), and STARS, the computerized grading program. These systems are used to inform parents, students, and teachers of student data history, to monitor student progress, and ensure that school goals are effectively monitored. Additionally, all teachers engage in professional development, and are encouraged to use a reflection tool to think about, and adjust their instructional practices in efforts to meet student's needs, close the achievement gap, and encourage student's personal behaviors. While the school ensures ongoing communication with parents, and families feel supported in their ability to monitor and track their children's progress in academic and social-emotional growth, they also expressed limited understanding of school improvement plans. During a parent interview, parents were uncertain of their roles in decision-making processes, how to address school needs, and were unclear how to contribute ideas and feedback to leverage school changes. Thus, there are missed opportunities to engage parents in reciprocal communications, create a full

understanding of the school's programs, and enlist them in further supporting implementation of school improvement plans.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Magnet school for Civics in the Community	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