



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

M.S. 180 Dr. Daniel Hale Williams

**Middle School X180
700 Baychester Avenue
Bronx
NY 10475**

Principal: Frank Uzzo

**Dates of review: May 13-14, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Holly Reichert**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

M.S. 180 Dr. Daniel Hale Williams is a middle school with 865 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 68% Black, 25% Hispanic, 2% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 94.5%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curricular plans follow the Understanding by Design format, align to the Common Core and are refined using student work and data to promote access and a path to college and career for all students. (1.1)
 - To build coherence across grades and subjects, teachers use the Understanding by Design format to plan units of study and daily lessons. Learning is framed by essential questions, and delivery of instruction follows the workshop model aligned to the school's belief that student learn best when they are shown how, and then try it out themselves. Using common templates, teachers create and refine units and daily plans aligned to the Common Core Standards, the instructional shifts and student learning needs. Teachers who teach the same subject and grade collaboratively develop units of study, and weekly team meetings ensure curricular continuity. Planning documents reviewed include student groupings and explicit individual, pair and group tasks that focus on interactive problem solving, reading and discussion. For example, one math lesson plan reviewed included a hands-on, collaborative group problem solving task requiring conceptual understanding and critiquing the reasoning of others. Unit plans reviewed included lists of academic and domain-specific vocabulary as well as the informational and literary texts to be used. All students, including special education students and English language learners, engage in the same curricula in all subjects, and teachers plan adjustments for learner needs. Lesson plans reviewed included how learning would be differentiated for diverse learners, including the use of leveled texts and questions, manipulatives, visual supports and homogeneous groups for small group instruction. Teachers plan access through the use of heterogeneous grouping to provide struggling students with opportunities to work with more proficient students. Furthermore, teachers use assessment data to create student groupings and refine planning from day to day. One teacher revised her math lesson based on observations and assessment data from the day before. Instead of conducting presentations of visual models of shapes created through nets, the teacher planned a collaborative problem solving activity aimed at deepening students' conceptual understanding of surface area before proceeding with the presentations. Grade-level content teams review student work and data to identify learning gaps and adjust units. During the grade 8 English language arts team meeting observed, teachers reviewed pre-assessment data for all classes, identified thesis statement and counterclaim as learning gaps across the grade, and decided to include five additional lessons and adjusted the pacing of the unit to allow for more time. Thus, collaborative planning and refining of common units and lessons ensures all students receive challenging curricula and tasks aligned to standards and tailored to student need.
- Budget resources, staff time, programming and distributed leadership are skillfully aligned with school goals to meet the needs of students and teachers to improve learning outcomes and pedagogical practice. (1.3)

- To support the attendance goal, the school purchased a direct dial system so that automated outreach would be possible. The school attributes a 1% increase in daily attendance, which on average is 96%, to the addition of this system. To address Common Core resource needs, the school purchased over \$70,000 in texts for core subjects and spent \$20,000 to upgrade the library's informational text collection. Parents commented that the school's expenditure on instructional materials was essential to meet the needs of the Common Core. For example, the school purchased class sets of grade-level literary and informational texts for argumentative essay units. Student work samples from social studies reviewed showed textual evidence pulled from various sources to support how the effects of the Great Depression impacted the world. Materials purchased are also used in the school's extended day and Saturday programs and provide students with textbooks and workbooks to take home. Conjointly, to address the school's curriculum and pedagogy goals, the school hired a lead teacher to deepen curricular planning and instruction aimed at accelerating pedagogical growth. The lead teacher plays an integral role supporting school-wide curriculum work, teacher team work, and professional development. Common periods provide teacher teams time to meet weekly and teachers to plan collaboratively. During the grade 8 English language arts team observed, teachers discussed pre-assessment results and common lesson adjustments to ensure all students across the grade master identifying statistics, thesis statements and supporting details. Grade leaders also meet weekly as a team to discuss student work and planning to ensure coherence vertically from grade 6 to grade 8. The school's eight Academic Intervention Teams meet monthly with the guidance counselor to track and support targeted students with academic and behavioral interventions. Teachers interviewed stated that their practice has improved as a result of dedicated time and opportunities provided to plan and visit peer's classrooms. One teacher shared that she gleaned an assessment technique from visiting a peer's classroom, and as a result is now able to better adjust instruction to meet student needs within the lesson. To ensure students' interests, strengths and learning needs are addressed, students programs are individualized by level of performance and all students choose from four arts education options. The school offers an honors track and Regents-level math, science and Spanish. Special education students have flexible scheduling, and are programmed with general education peers for arts education classes. The school's four small learning communities are overseen by assistant principals and teachers on comp-time positions. Distributed leadership is embedded in the small learning community house structure with teachers serving as 'house assists' who have a reduced teaching load and specific administrative duties. For example, they play a key role in tracking and addressing attendance issues in each house. To date, attendance has increased to 95.2% year to date from 94.5% in 2012-13.
- Positive and respectful, the school focuses on teaching and learning, addressing individual needs, and personal and academic behaviors thus promoting an environment of mutual responsibility and contribution. (1.4)
 - The school's motto, "a school of excellence and opportunity", and theory of action, 'through empowering individuals, the community benefits', underpin the school's positive and respectful culture. Highlighting the safe and respectful culture, one parent stated, "With an environment like this, it puts me to rest when I go to work." The school's small learning community

house structure and delineated roles of house members empowers staff to address school goals. For example, the house assist is directly responsible to tracking attendance and coordinating outreach. As a result, attendance has increased to 95.2% year to date. The school attributes improved student attendance to coordinated attendance outreach. One student who was late 22 times during the first semester of 2013 improved, as a result of targeted support, to zero lateness to date during the spring semester of 2014. One parent shared that he appreciated the personal attention he received and how easy it has been for him to meet with the director and teachers of his child's house. As a result of a meeting he had to address the needs of his child, he added, "my child has excelled and her attitude has improved. I am very happy with the resolution." Students echoed the role teachers and staff play in their lives helping them to take responsibility and do their best. One student commented, "The school helps me strive for greatness, and it is very fulfilling to achieve my goals." Another student added, "The school helps me be a better person; they not only teach us, they build our character." Student contribution and voice is encouraged. Students have a number of leadership opportunities to choose from, including class leadership roles, peer tutoring, Library Leaders, and the Community Team. In an effort to increase peer reading, Library Leaders spearheaded an effort to organize and expand classroom libraries through a Scholastic book fair and a \$40 fill-a-box offer. Books from the fair restocked classroom library shelves and were also organized by student Library Leaders to encourage peer reading. Students shared that they feel supported by teachers and the staff of the school. They said that the adults in their house know them by name and that they feel comfortable speaking to adults when they have a problem or need help. Many of the students mentioned the parent coordinator as one of the adults with whom they have a strong relationship. The guidance counselors and teachers work closely to support students who are in need of behavioral support. Teachers received training to implement Project New Life, a positive behavior system used in the classroom, and families were informed of the program goals and are involved in following their child's progress. Special education students and some students tracked by the Academic Intervention Team participate in Project New Life. To support work habits and organizational skills as well as self-regulation and persistence, students earn points for accomplishing four defined goals. Student point records reviewed showed improved homework completion and increases in attaining the four goals over time. In addition to this program and the school-wide emphasis on excellence, the school also supports character education promoting appropriate behavior, language and habits through homeroom, town hall meetings and daily community announcements. A parent emphasized, "The school is getting the students ready for the real world not only with academics but where punctuality and appropriate dress are important."

- The school's culture for learning communicates high expectations for all staff, students and families, and provides supports to meet those expectations to ensure high school and college readiness. (3.4)
 - School leaders communicate expectations to staff, students and families through meetings, distributed written information, daily announcements and the school's website. During whole staff professional development days, staff receives information about expectations for instruction, teacher evaluation and professional learning, as well as discipline and student

supports. For example, teachers received professional development on the Danielson Framework and shared, that following training focused on using Understanding by Design to plan units, teams collaboratively plan and review common units following the school's agreed upon format and content expectations. From classrooms observed, it was evident that school-wide expectations, rituals and routines are in place and teachers and students understand and follow them. For example, students are purposefully grouped and expected to engage in collaborative conversations using academic language from the unit. Teachers reiterate expectations for academics and behavior through the use of specific criteria. Rubrics and checklists inform students of criteria used to evaluate group, oral and written work. Student also use this criteria to assess their and peer work. A student shared, "We know what's expected with the rubric." Another added, "We have a rubric for each test. The teacher allows us to read the rubric and we focus on level 4. That's where we should be." Parents spoke at length about the school's high expectations. One parent started by saying, "The school has standards and parents have high expectations." Another parent added, "The curriculum allows them to think outside the box. For example, in math, my child wrote an essay, how are integers applied in life?" A parent continued, "The school's Weebly website provides us with information about what is expected of our child. There is information from the teachers as well as resources and tools for students." Another stated, "The school is preparing the kids for the real world with character education, punctuality and the dress code." Another parent added on, "The school communicates regularly by phone. Teachers call if my child did not have his homework." Parents continued by sharing that the school provides honors and Regents level classes that push students to the next level and prepare them for the work ahead in high school and college. Parents and students echoed assignments such as the critical lens essay in English language arts as an example of how the school is preparing them for high school. The parents also commented on discipline and behavior by stating that there is no bullying or fights. One parent went on to say that the change of classes is smooth and quiet. The parents also emphasized the involvement of the parent coordinator stressing her high expectations for students. One parent stated. "I am grateful for her. She is raising the children to be great citizens."

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen teacher questioning and discussion practices that engage all students in initiating and exchanging ideas, providing evidence and critiquing peer responses, thus leading to student ownership of learning. (1.2)
 - Teachers are expected to differentiate instruction for diverse learners and plan for student interaction in their daily lessons. Across classrooms visited, teachers planned for student collaboration and discussion through partner, group and whole-class discussions. In all core subject classes visited, students were seated in groups of four to six. Plans showed how students were selected by levels of proficiency for heterogeneous groups. In some classes, work distributed to partnerships and groups was leveled to align with proficiency, while in other classes students received the same task or text. Some supports distributed to specific students included visuals, manipulatives and math tools. During whole class discussions, some teachers asked questions and called on individual students to respond while others prompted other students to add on, agree/disagree

or repeat what was stated. In a number of classes, teachers prompted students to speak louder, project their voice and face their classmates when speaking. In a few exchanges, some students took the initiative to state who they agreed with and why without prompting from the teacher. In one scenario, following whole group teacher directed questioning, the teacher asked students to turn and talk with their partner and the called them back to share out as a whole. During discussion of texts, a few teachers prompted students to provide evidence to back up their statements. While teachers clearly plan for access and vary opportunities for student interaction, not all students shared their thinking, provided where their thinking came from or commented on the thinking of others. Thus, teachers do not fully facilitate student interaction that brings forth the thinking of all students and collective accountability for collaborative conversations leading to student ownership.

- Refine common assessment practices so that feedback, checks for understanding and the tracking of student progress provide a clear picture of student mastery and areas for growth to move to the next level. (2.2)
 - Students receive feedback on written work and are evaluated by criteria in rubrics and checklists that correlate with the school’s universal grading policy. Students also self-and peer-assess using the same rubrics. On written work reviewed, scoring is provided to students in percentages that align with rubric and checklist points. Students have portfolios for their work in literacy and math that track their efforts over time. Students shared how they improved by referring to the percentages on various tasks in their portfolio. Students also shared feedback that teachers had written on their papers which included what they did well and what they need to improve. Some of the next steps shared included: “add more detail”, “use more vocabulary” and “need to write the x and y coordinates”. One student shared that he received a 3 on his writing, and to improve and move to a 4, he needed to use more sophisticated language. Another student shared that math goals are set after the pre-test, and she knows she improved when she sees the change in percentages comparing the pre- and post- test. For example, she received 31% on her pre-test and 93% on her post-test and said that she had thus met her goal for rational numbers. Another student shared her literacy baseline of 69% and literacy benchmark of 95%; however, she did not state what that meant in terms writing skills or criteria met. Teachers also track student progress comparing baseline data with benchmark outcomes, look at test items aligned to standards and analyze unit pre-and post-test percentages. One document reviewed showed grade and class data listed in numbers of students who improved, declined or stayed the same. Check for understanding used to monitor progress during class instruction include direct questioning thumbs up/down, use of green and red cards, exit slips, and teacher observations. It is clear that teachers assess student learning and track progress. It was also evident that students know how they are evaluated, what scores they received and what their next steps are as per rubric criteria and teacher comments. However, it was not evident that teachers had a clear understanding of student standards mastery by skill, practice and/or instructional shift. As a result, the school is limited in its ability to speak to student learning in precise terms thus giving a portrait of individual and group mastery and specific needs to move to the next level.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: M.S. 180 Dr. Daniel Hale Williams	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