



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Shell Bank

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School K014

**2424 Batchelder Street
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: Teri Ahearn

**Date of review: March 9, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Julia Bove**

The School Context

Shell Bank is a middle school with 560 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 53% Black, 15% Hispanic, 22% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school has established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provides supports to achieve those expectations.

Impact

Effective communication is connected to college and career readiness through successful partnerships with families. Staff systematically communicates a unified set of high expectations and provides focused feedback for all learners, including high needs subgroups, to ensure that they are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's parent coordinator distributes a monthly newsletter. The school also has a website that parents, staff, and administration use to stay in contact and share information. The school provides ongoing workshops for parents including workshops for parents of English language learners and students with disabilities. The school also has parent outreach on Tuesday afternoons.
- The school's Phoenix program assists students with their college and career aspirations. For example, the school hosted a "Bring your dad to school" day. Students wrote poems to their fathers, and fathers shared aspects of their education and careers.
- Through the school's I Matter program, students visited Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn. College students and graduates shared their journey from an inner city, middle school to being accepted to and attending college.
- The social studies department initiated a college and career readiness campaign. Students wrote to their parents outlining their plan for college after researching what career they wanted to pursue. This evolved into a college and career readiness poster contest in which students pictorially illustrated their path to college. Additionally, each classroom door was decorated to show the college that each teacher attended.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

While teachers have collaboratively developed common assessments and rubrics aligned with the school's curricula, they do not always use the resulting data from student work analysis to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

Actionable feedback that is rubric-based is provided to students across classrooms. Students use this feedback to improve their work. However, there are missed opportunities to use data analysis to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Students state that they receive rubrics before being given an assignment. They also state that teachers give them feedback through rubrics and that this helps them to progress. However, feedback to students is sometimes non-specific with regard to next steps. For example, although one student stated that rubric-based feedback "helps me learn from my mistakes," the student could not articulate what the mistakes were or what he should do to fix them.
- The school uses MyOn, a web-based service that provides 24-hour online access to enhanced digital books. Students are matched to books based on their interests and assessed reading level. However, there are missed opportunities to monitor increases in reading fluency of students.
- Teachers collaboratively review student work, analyze grade-wide assessments, and assess student progress after each performance task for evidence of student growth as well as gaps in learning. This allows teachers to regroup students without needing to wait for scheduled benchmark assessments. However, groups are not shifted as frequently as the data allows.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The leadership team ensures that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, and that curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

Curricular coherence across grades and subjects results in a diversity of learners having access to cognitively engaging tasks and curricula that promote college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school revises existing curriculum as needed. English language learners and students with special needs are held to the same high standards as all learners and curriculum is adjusted to provide entry points that allow access to units and lessons. For example, grade 6 unit plans include the use of native language dictionaries for English language learners and “head start” prompts for students who struggle with higher order thinking skills.
- Science teachers write their own curriculum. They do not use a pre-determined textbook. This has resulted in teacher and student ownership of the curriculum. The science curriculum was adjusted to include daily weather reports, as a result of suggestions from students. The students research and report on the weather daily.
- Social studies teachers have modified units to align to the new scope and sequence. Each teacher has an individual blog that students use to interact with the curriculum and with teachers.
- Based on changes that were made in the past, such as adding a writing component to the English language arts curriculum and holding all students to the same standards, the school is graduating its first group of students who have been admitted to New York City Specialized High Schools.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teacher practices are aligned to a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn and meet the needs of all learners.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's instructional focus is to have students show measureable growth in their ability to comprehend text and respond to open response questions, using details, and relevant information from text for support. The school's focus is based on the belief that all students can achieve high standards when the school community is aware of the needs of each student and works collaboratively to meet those needs and close the achievement gap. Teachers believe that incorporating reciprocal reading into their instructional routine for scaffolding reading comprehension will help students with the school's instructional focus.
- The school's instructional focus for this year is to have students show measureable growth in their ability to comprehend text and respond to open response questions, using details, and relevant information from text for support. Teachers implement reciprocal reading in their instructional routine for scaffolding reading comprehension.
- In a social studies classroom, students had to read part of a text that applied to an ancient Sumerian invention they had chosen previously to study. They then shared out what kind of jobs that would have been created and compared them to jobs in the present day.
- In a mathematics classroom, students working in pairs examining each other's work to determine what they needed to do well. Displayed work showed evidence of error analysis: students identified the most common mistakes made in solving-multistep equations and stated steps needed to avoid them.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The principal ensures that the majority of teachers engage in ongoing content area professional collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, align practice to the school’s instructional goals, analyze assessment data.

Impact

Collaboration of teacher teams results in promoting the progress toward school goals for diverse learners and strengthening teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly to discuss student work. Teacher team members alternate conducting these meetings and sharing student work. At an observed English language arts meeting, all three grades were present. Teachers were sitting by grade and comparing three samples of student work: one from a general education student, one from an English language learner, and one from a student with special needs. They determined student strengths and next steps and completed teacher exit slips documenting these findings.
- Teachers grouped themselves into cohorts determined by the official classes they serve and by subject. For example, the math, science, social studies, and English language arts teachers who serve class 601 are in the same cohort. Teachers state that this gives them flexibility in the planning of units and making instructional changes for groups of students.
- Teachers engage in inquiry-based discussions three times per month by content area and once per month in vertical teams. Teams inform the entire staff of what occurred at meetings through email. They determine the efficacy of the units from one grade to another and ensure their continued alignment to Common Core Learning Standards, thus establishing coherence across all teams.