



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Dr. Gladstone Atwell

Middle School 17K061

**400 Empire Boulevard
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

Principal: Dr. Shannon Burton

Date of review: November 14, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich

The School Context

Dr. Gladstone H. Atwell is a junior high school with 756 students from grade six through grade 8. The school population comprises 89% Black, 9% Hispanic, .8% White, and .8% Asian students. The student body includes 5.9% English language learners and 12.5% special education students. Boys account for 47.5 % of the students enrolled and girls account for 52.5%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93%.

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	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

Findings

The majority of teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborative sessions where they consistently analyze student work and assessment data, toward meeting schoolwide goals and implementing the instructional shifts.

Impact

These collaborations typically result in improved teacher pedagogy and improved student progress toward goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in subject and grade teams to focus on targeted students, determining action plans and goals, resulting in moving their scores from one level to the next. Teachers use protocols for this inquiry work and facilitate their own learning. Administrative liaisons support the meetings.
- For example in a math team meeting, teachers analyzed the results of a common assessment and determined next teaching steps, targeted support or extensions for students, including lunch-and-learn, reflected on instructional strategies, and determined differentiation for groups of students. Instructional strategies are rooted in real-world applications, incorporating the instructional shifts, with examples and a focus on the development of student engagement through higher order thinking questions for discussion. Part of the action plan includes student graphing their own assessment results and reflecting on these results in relation to their individual goals. These student goals are aligned to teacher, department and schoolwide goals.
- For example, the grade team meets to interconnect curricula, tasks, and Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) as evidenced by the teachers of Integrated Algebra incorporating scientific notation so students would have the foundation during chemistry class. This collaboration yielded math lessons with differentiated graphic organizers and prompts for leveled groups, based on student data. As a result, students used scientific notation with facility in chemistry class.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are inconsistently providing multiple entry points into the curricula where student work products and discussions demonstrate uneven levels of student thinking and engagement.

Impact

The inconsistent multiple entry points into the curricula lead to uneven levels of student engagement and a variable demonstration of higher-order thinking and discussion for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- In a math class, students were divided into groups of four and took on roles of novice, apprentice, practitioner and expert, with the goal to work together and support learning ensuring that none remain as novice as their scores move up the scale. Some groups follow the model and work collaboratively following the protocols, while many students work individually while sitting together. Further, some groups of students remain the same while others change the student membership.
- In a 7th grade ICT science class questions were teacher-directed, quickly delivered, and at the lower levels of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) scale, resulting in missed opportunities for increased student engagement and discussion demonstrating higher-order thinking skills. There was no evidence observed that students received differentiated materials or entry points.
- In a social studies class with mostly English language learner students, a student new to the country presented a PowerPoint choosing not to use her prepared hand-held notes. The audience demonstrated active listening skills and had a rubric on which to grade the presenter. After the presentation, only a few students spoke and offered feedback, illustrating a missed opportunity for deeper engagement.
- Similarly, in an advanced math class, students presented group projects on exponents. Although a few audience members asked clarifying and probing questions, these were predominantly teacher directed. There was no system to ensure that all students were engaged during the presentations.
- In an English class, students moved from centers to a whole group discussion where the teacher made several invitations to engage students in student-to-student discussion, but only a small number actually participated in the discussion, and some used accountable talk stems. Students were unable to demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation in discussion.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student data and student work.

Impact

As a result of aligning the curricula to the CCLS, school leaders and faculty are making focused decisions to build coherence to foster college and career readiness for all. A diversity of learners has access to curricula and academic tasks as a result of refining using data and student work.

Supporting Evidence

- Decisions to build coherence are evident in the aligned curricula maps and unit plans. For example the mathematics curriculum maps and unit plans demonstrate essential questions with real-world connections, rooted in the CCLS. School Leaders and faculty have adapted the curricula to meet student needs and adjusted the unit plans based on student data and work, noting the refinements of standards addressed, time allotted, alignment to other subjects outside math, as well as, inside this and other units.
- Faculty has selected a format for lesson planning, ensuring that all use the same components, including essential question, focus question, standards (CCLS/state), prerequisite skills, vocabulary, warm-up, mini-lesson, higher-order thinking questions, independent work, differentiated work, homework, and reflections. These reflections, thoughts, and evidence of learning become springboards for evaluating their own lessons and outcomes leading to revisions based on student work.
- School leaders and faculty have implemented eight classes that end in a Regents exam, US History, Global History, Chemistry, Earth Science, Living Environment, Integrated Algebra, Geometry, and English, thus promoting access to college and career readiness for all students. In the 2013-14 school year, 37.1% percent of 8th graders earned high school credit. The school projects an increase based on the additional courses offered and current student data. Additionally, the school also offers Advanced Placement Spanish culture that provides students college credits if they pass the exam. Furthermore, the school also offers three world languages Spanish, Korean, and French that ensures students have a choice and currently all sixth graders are taking a world language. In addition, students have the option to take science related career classes at a nearby college, to promote college/career readiness skills.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	---------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, grades, and subjects, teachers use and create assessments, common assessments and rubrics aligned to the curricula, to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Across classrooms, these assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. These results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Students spoke about using rubrics in every assignment, and using them to help determine how to get a better grade. Students also demonstrated facility with actionable feedback and understood their next steps to improve in the next task. Students track end of marking period grades in their notebooks. Bulletin boards inside and outside the classrooms demonstrated student work with rubrics and actionable feedback with next steps. Some next steps are in student-friendly language.
- Teachers use data from assessments to adjust curricula and instruction. For example, the English language arts department analyzed data from a common assessment revealing that citing textual evidence and finding theme were areas for deeper reteaching. From this they refined the next unit to incorporate citing textual evidence in multiple texts and determining theme. As a result, students' scores improved based on this reteaching.
- The mathematics department consistently uses the data from pre-tests and post-test and has students graph these results to reflect on the actionable feedback and progress toward goals. Students spoke about how this process has helped them to understand on what they did well and on what they still to work to improve. These graphs and reflections were posted in math classes.
- Exit tickets are used in many classes and include a self-reflection rating scale and a box to check whether the student was able at this time to help someone else learn this. Teachers use these exit slips to adjust student groupings, curricula, and instruction the following day.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff and provide professional development opportunities. Staff and school leaders consistently communicate the message of college and career readiness.

Impact

As a result school leaders have a system of accountability for these high expectations. Staff provides ongoing feedback to families to support understanding of student progress toward goals of college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders provide staff with professional development aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and holds staff accountable through a cycle of observations, teacher team meeting agendas and minutes of collaborative inquiry, and supportive actionable feedback and next steps. Training aligned to Danielson Framework for Teaching occurs monthly.
- Parents stated that teachers communicate consistently regarding their child's progress toward goals, alerting them if their child has excelled or fallen behind and needs extra help. Parents stated that although teachers have different methods, each is consistent in their communication. The school leaders have provided staff with professional development on parent engagement. The school has an open door policy that welcomes all types of communications—phone calls, emails, texts, letters, and in person meetings. Additionally, the school is implementing a new centralized system for parent/student communication of student progress toward goals and is conducting professional development for staff and parents.
- Teachers provide lunch-and-learn for students to receive extensions, extra help or time on task during lunchtime. This is a schoolwide practice that is part of the culture for high expectations. Students spoke about visiting teachers during lunch-and-learn, going to those teachers who invite them for specific areas of need, or more widely observed, student self-selected sessions.