



# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Margaret Mead School**

**Elementary – Middle School K209**

**2609 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11235**

**Principal: Frances Locurcio**

**Date of review: May 11, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Steven Chernigoff**

## The School Context

The Margaret Mead School is an elementary – middle school with 725 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade eight. The school population comprises 3% Black, 24% Hispanic, 43% White, and 28% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93.8%.

## School Quality Criteria

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

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Well Developed**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subjects.

### Impact

Curricular alignment results in coherence across grades and subject areas that promotes college and career readiness for all students. Curricula and academic tasks require all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs), to demonstrate their thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's curricula are all aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. In literacy, the school uses Ready Gen in grades K-5 and CodeX in grades 6-8. These curricula help the school fulfill its instructional focus of improving students' comprehension of non-fiction texts and demonstrating their understanding through writing across the content areas. Ready Gen is strong in addressing the shifts of the common core by providing a lot of non-fiction material for students to read and study. Both Ready and Gen and CodeX provide a staircase of increasingly complex texts and a good deal of academic vocabulary, ensuring that student become college and career ready. Eighth grade students had to write an argumentative essay about whether empathy and knowledge are needed to create great art. Students had to cite evidence from sources they researched and present a claim and counterclaim. Teachers also engage students in "team talks", in which small groups of students have conversations about literature and non-fiction readings.
- In math, the school uses CMP3, supplemented with Go Math in grades K-8. The school uses CMP3 but teachers feel it does not fully meet their students' needs and so the school made the thoughtful decision to utilize units from Go Math, and to supplement it further with units from EngageNY in the middle school. In keeping with its instructional focus, the school is also emphasizing social studies and science literacy. Students read primary source documents and write to those sources, making sure to cite evidence as much as possible in all subject areas.
- The school has done a lot of work on questioning and discussion, related to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the shifts of the common core. Teachers incorporate higher-order thinking questions into all lessons and are mindful of the types of questions and their DOK level that they ask. Teachers employ turn and talks, paired discussions, as well as the team talks, to improve student engagement and the rigor of lessons. Another emphasis is on wait time, whereby, teachers wait for students to answer questions, rather than immediately provide the answer. This is especially emphasized for English language learners and Special education students. In an ELL English language arts lesson, the students read a non-fiction article, "Seat Belts Mean Safety" and cited evidence to answer higher-order thinking questions, and learned content vocabulary.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### Impact

Teachers' assessments provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement but opportunities for students to make immediate improvements are missed.

Teachers' assessment practices allow them to make effective adjustments to meet all students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers utilize the writing process to have students write drafts of essays and other forms of writing, and use of graphic organizers where appropriate. Teachers give feedback according to a standards-based rubric across grades, although it is more consistently applied in the elementary grades than in the middle school. Teachers provide feedback to students on next steps for their writing, on final drafts and serves to inform students' next writing projects. There is less substantive feedback given on early drafts of student writing and tends to be more about mechanics than about understanding, meaning or development. In one classroom, the teacher's comments to three out of four students' posted work was about grammar, capitalization or spelling.
- The school uses a universal grading policy of levels 1-4 on progress reports that are given out four time per year. In January, the school started using iReady in grades two through eight. It has two diagnostics tests per year and students can work on the program at home as well as at school, both for assessment as well as for instructional purposes. In addition to the computer program adapting to students present level of performance, teachers utilize the data to adjust their own instruction for each student.
- In a fifth grade Integrated co-teaching class doing a literacy in science lesson based on the book *George's Secret Key to the Universe*, by Lucy and Stephen Hawking, the teacher had students create an open-mind portrait of different characters in the story, in order to engage them in thinking more deeply about those characters and events in the story and demonstrate their learning. Students worked in groups to draw symbols and think of words to describe the characters, and then presented their work to the class as a summary of the lesson. One group showed off their picture and said the character was sinister, "because he wants to steal the cosmos." Another group called their character sassy and adventurous. To both groups, a group of students at the back table agreed with the characterizations and added more ideas. These students raised their hands repeatedly and the teacher called on them each time, including one student who answered four different times. However, no other students participated in the discussion. In another class, the students were engaged in groups to find the experimental probability of a specific event, such as flipping a cup, tossing a die or flipping a coin. Students did the activity and discussed the results. However, the students did not finish the activity and the teacher could not assess whether students understood probability because students said that the uneven shape of the cup made it difficult to predict a reliable result to the experiment.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Teaching practices engage all learners, including English language learners and Special education students, in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- In a second grade literacy in science lesson, in which the class read the book, *Planet Earth*, the teacher asked about the earth's layers and a student replied, "Under the earth is the inner core, outer core and mantle." The teacher asked, "Where did you find it?" and the student cited the evidence, "I found it on page 12...from the cut-out diagram." In a seventh grade English Language Arts Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, the students worked in groups to discuss different articles on recent natural disasters, the earthquake in Nepal and Hurricane Sandy, which many students in this school in south Brooklyn experienced first-hand. Students then had to write a comparative essay to support their claim with textual evidence. Additionally, the groups were created based on a student pretest of claim, counterclaim, evidence and reasoning; and were altered due to student accommodations. One student needed to wear an FM unit and was assisted by a paraprofessional, who repeated the teacher's directions; the student group leader also wore an FM unit. Another student, with a visual impairment, was provided with large font print. Finally, some students' articles were leveled to their appropriate lexile level by the teacher, by using newsela.com or rewordify.com, which are websites that reword articles to students' appropriate reading levels, providing a key scaffold for students who need it.
- In a third grade Instructional co teaching class, the teachers facilitated a literacy in social studies lesson, students read the book *Brave Girl*, about immigrants to the United States and the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory strike. One teacher sat with a group of students and told them to write down on post-its how the illustration on page 4-5 and the words in the text help them understand what they see. "Tell your turn and talk partner." One student said, "[I see] a ship with people on the ship." Her partner said, "I see the Statue of Liberty." A student at another table said to her partner, "They're going to New York City because I see the Statue of Liberty, because the Statue of Liberty is near New York City."
- In a third grade self-contained class, the teacher did a math lesson on area and square units. The teacher had the opening problem on the smart board and students were in groups to solve it. The teacher had a student read question #5 out loud; he gave his answer and the teacher replied, "How'd you know that?" and the student responded. The teacher said show me perimeter over here, and she pointed to the area in front of the smart board, in which she had set down tongue sticks on the floor in a rectangle to demonstrate perimeter and area. Strands of string ran outside the sticks in red to show perimeter and inside the rectangle in blue to show area. The teacher referred to this layout as she had students then draw perimeter on their paper by connecting the dots into the shape of a square, making four squares and then connecting adjacent squares into seven of them.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff, as well as to students and families, who receive ongoing feedback connected to a path to college and career readiness.

### Impact

Teachers are held accountable for their professionalism and instructional practices. The school's communication of high expectations to families helps them understand student progress towards those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have received training around the Danielson Framework for Teaching and are rated according to it rubric. Teachers receive meaningful feedback on observation reports and are expected to incorporate the suggestions into their practice, which will be looked for on the next visit. Teachers do inter-visitations of each other's classrooms, sometimes as suggested by the administration but also through their own initiative to improve their skills. Teachers are asked for their input and interests for professional learning and have the opportunity to choose from a menu of activities as well as to go outside the school to workshops and meetings.
- The school uses Engrade and class Dojo to communicate with parents about student progress. However, the school recognizes the limitations of Engrade and is transitioning to Datacation/Skedula. Parents in general are happy with the communication from the school, feeling that lines are open at all times and that the entire staff is very approachable, especially the principal. Multiple parents said, "They know my child." Parents receive phone calls and emails from teachers on a regular basis, and the school sends out a monthly newsletter. The school holds workshops for parents too, on the Common Core Learning Standards, math curriculum and state testing.
- Students like the school and feel supported. They report that teachers are preparing them for high school and college. A fifth grader said that the work is challenging and that, "When you're done [with an assignment] the teacher has a folder with sixth and seventh grade work to complete." Another student said that even the lower groups in class get challenging work, "You get your own level's work" so that you are challenged to grow. But an eighth grader said, "The work is rigorous but mundane at times. I don't remember the last time I wrote a creative piece." The school prepares its middle school students for the specialized high schools exam although not all of them have had the opportunity to take the preparation course. Still, through trips and also through guidance activities for students and parents, many children in the elementary school apply to and leave for selective middle schools, and also to the specialized high schools. Staff discuss college and careers frequently with students, and the school holds an annual Career Day, as well as a College and Career Ready Professional Learning for parents event.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

**Impact**

Teachers’ professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the CCLS and instructional shifts, and strengthen their capacity. Analysis of student work results in improved teacher practice and progress toward goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In the elementary school grade teams meet once a week during common planning time, on different days and various periods. They also meet during Tuesday afternoon extended time for 35 minutes. Middle school subject area teams also meet during one common prep period during the day and during Tuesday afternoon time. However, middle school teachers do not meet in grade-level teams, limiting opportunities for teachers to discuss common issues among students they share and plan for interdisciplinary activities.
- Teacher teams follow the ATLAS protocol for looking at student work. Each member is responsible for facilitating a meeting and sharing student work. Members analyze both summative and formative data, review curricular units and make adjustments. The middle school English language arts team analyzed student work to see how well students understood context clues when reading. Their target by June is for 30% of their target students to show progress in determining the meaning of words and phrases in narrative nonfiction texts. Interim assessments show that nearly 50% of target students show progress in mastering this skill.
- Seventh grade social studies teachers planned a unit on the Vietnam War together, which helped them improve their practice. Rather than relying on the textbook, teachers brought in videos, researched articles, and compared that war to both World War II and also to the contemporary issue of the rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) in the Middle East. Fifth grade math teachers planned for students to do a performance task; then they asked the students to self-reflect on how to make the task better and how to get the students to do better, and they had the students create their own task and have a classmate solve it.