Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Satellite East Middle School

Middle School K301

344 Monroe Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216

Principal: Kim McPherson

Date of review: January 14, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Jo Ann Benoit

The School Context

Satellite East Middle School is a middle school with 164 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 75% Black, 11% Hispanic, 3% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 86.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Proficient**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders consistently establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families and provides feedback and guidance to them.

Impact
As a result of leadership clearly conveying the school's high expectations all stakeholders in the school are aware of the expectations delineated for them, are given the supports to meet those expectations. Staff and teacher teams help students and families understand student progress and offer feedback to prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Administrators share high expectations with the faculty through the staff manual, including expectations that lessons provide a flow of the day and make targets visible in classrooms, among others. School leaders also support cultivating an environment conducive to learning for all; teachers post their team meeting minutes online for administrators and their colleagues in order to share the work they are doing as well as receive feedback. They also recite a pledge during their study group meetings that they have signed which begins, "I promise to be the kind of student that I would like my own students to be."

- Parents shared the many ways they communicate with the school and spoke of the open door policy that exists with the teachers and the administrators. Parents receive information about their children's achievement and school-related activities via emails, phone calls, quarterly progress reports, report cards, monthly calendars and newsletters. The school also uses Jupiter Grade, an online tracking and grading system, and invites parents to sit in on lessons.

- Parents also spoke about workshops that are developed for them to better understand the expectations for their children. For example, every month teachers in the different content areas offer workshops in their field to help parents understand the work their children are asked to produce. In December, the science teachers offered a workshop on the different types of investigations students are asked to conduct and the scientific method.

- The staff sets the tone in the school for what is expected from students. The Shining Stars awards assemblies and breakfast promote student academic and citizenship growth. Guidance counselors meet with students individually and in groups, organize high school fairs for seniors, and sit in classrooms to observe students in an academic setting to better support them. An overage class is offered to the large overage population in the school to best help the staff meet their unique needs.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching strategies inconsistently provide access into the curricula for groups of students.

Impact
As a result of teachers inconsistently providing multiple entry points into the curricula, there is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and student demonstration of higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's belief about how students learn best is based on the theory that students learn in many ways: they may work well independently, in groups or with the assistance of a teacher, and teachers need to utilize these different work processes to meet the needs of their students. In two of the six classrooms visited, teachers offered multiple entry points in their lessons, which provided access to the curricula and appropriately challenging work to groups of students. For example, in an English language arts (ELA) class, students were reading about myths and were required to answer questions about the reading. English language learners and students with disabilities were working with a teacher while others were working individually while a second the teacher moved from group to group. The students' texts were leveled to facilitate their understanding, thus there was more even participation in the group discussions. In a math class, as one teacher was reviewing the "do now" with the class, the other teacher was moving around checking students' notebooks in order to assign students the appropriate graphic organizer for independent work.

- In one ELA class, the students were engaged in an activity that required them to evaluate an essay using a checklist and to write down strengths and weaknesses from the essay. Although students were engaged in the work, the teacher constantly interrupted them to repeat directions and clarify questions, not allowing them the time needed to negotiate their answers among themselves.

- Across classrooms, teachers consistently asked closed questions. For example, in one math class, one of the teachers asked a string of recall questions throughout the "do now", directing the conversation and ensuring it was happening between individual students and herself following the IRE model – initiate, recall and evaluate. Across classrooms, teachers also called on the same groups of students to answer questions. For example, in another math class visited, the teacher solved all of the problems on the board while asking the same students to answer questions. Lastly, in a social studies class, two pairs of students questioned were not able to say why they were learning about the Vietnam War. One pair had trouble explaining why they chose some of the text-based evidence they had added to their graphic organizer.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
School leaders and faculty have worked to align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and the instructional shifts to build coherence. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills and are planned using student work and data.

Impact
As a result of careful curriculum planning, school leaders and faculty promote college and career readiness for all students through units and tasks that are planned with students' needs and strengths in mind and that emphasize rigor across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty have made purposeful decisions around the expectations of components for lesson and unit planning. They have developed templates that are used by most teachers to emphasize the use of complex texts, evidence writing, argumentative writing, vocabulary development and tiered work, as well as other strategies. Tiered work especially supports the diverse learners in the classroom as it helps to differentiate through readings, templates, and other ways, the work for all students, especially English language learners and students with disabilities. All lessons are submitted to the administration for review and feedback is given to teachers before lesson implementation to ensure coherence.

- Teacher teams meet to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks using student work and data. Responding to student data that revealed that the majority of students struggle with reading at the grade level, the school decided to add an independent reading component to the English curriculum to allow students to access concepts at their independent reading levels. Additionally, small group support is offered to overage students to help them meet the academic expectations set for them.

- Curricula consistently emphasize rigorous habits. Teachers incorporate real world questions in curricula to engage students in higher-order thinking skills including doing research. Inquiry-based tasks offer choice and thus different entry points to a diversity of learners. In the curricula, students research, answer and present on questions such as, "Would an astronaut hear an explosion on the moon?" and "Can animals think?"

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use and create rubrics. Their assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding, opportunities for students to self-assessment and teachers providing actionable feedback to students

Impact
As a result of inconsistencies around assessment, students have interacted with work that does not consistently meet their learning needs and have received limited feedback regarding their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration has shared that school practices and summative assessment results show a disconnect between the two. The school is constantly trying to find ways to identify students' strengths and needs to offer additional interventions and actionable feedback to teachers.

- During the teacher interviews, teachers mentioned the use of running records, Measures of Student Learning, mid- and end-of-unit tests, exit slips, rubrics, checklists and homework as ways by which they assess students' achievement to make adjustments to the curricula and to academic tasks. They did not mention the practice of ongoing assessment in instruction which would allow them to support students during instruction. This is evidence of teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflecting the use of ongoing checks for understanding during class. Hence, there was confusion in some of the students visited who were not able to explain the tasks at hand yet continued to try to complete them without clarification.

- During the student interview, students showed their work with feedback. Many had checks, numbers and rubrics highlighted or circled providing students with limited actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Some of the feedback read "great job… be more settled in class…" while another teacher wrote the word "evidence" throughout a student's paper. It was not clear whether the teacher was seeing proof of evidence or lack thereof.

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

Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in teacher-led structured inquiry based professional collaborations during which they look at student work and there are opportunities for staff input into instructional decisions.

Impact
The teacher inquiry collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core. They result in improved teacher capacity and student progress towards goals and help teachers to have a voice in key decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet at minimum two to three times a week in grade teams, content teams and for professional development sessions. During the teacher teams, they rotate their roles to allow every teacher a chance at facilitation. The roles on the teams include facilitator, time keeper, and recorder. Minutes are shared with the staff online for feedback and transparency. All teams use a common protocol to facilitate the work in team meetings.

- Teacher teams consistently analyze student work. During the teacher team observation, the science teachers looked at student work around a project entitled “The Whirligig Challenge”. The teacher who presented her students’ work showed what they were able to do, what worked in her class and what she would recommend the others do differently. She shared that the students took longer than expected to do the reading, she added text boxes in the graphic organizer to allow students to write the page and the author’s name for their evidence, and spoke about the use of large post-its versus chart paper for the project since students were overwhelmed with the chart paper because they thought they had to fill it up with text.

- Teachers support one another and their own instructional practice through various professional development opportunities. Teachers have the opportunity to choose professional development offerings and lead many of the professional development sessions. They mentor one another through an in-house mentorship program. Teachers also observe one another regularly to strengthen their own instructional capacity. For example, many teachers visit the English teachers to find ways to incorporate literacy strategies in their own lessons. Teachers participate in lab sites and submit reflections about these visits that include strategies that they will use in their own practice and classrooms.

- Teachers have a voice in key decisions. They spoke about the reasons they elected to implement Positive Behavior Intervention and Support systems at their school both to support students’ social-emotional growth and their academic growth as well. They also shared about the changes in opportunities Urban Advantage has brought to their school, especially for the science teachers in terms of resources, materials, curricula, networking with other science teachers around the city and more.