Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Satellite West Academy
Middle School K313

209 York Street
Brooklyn
NY 11201

Principal: Dr. Melissa Vaughan

Date of review: December 10, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Barbara Freeman

The School Context

Satellite West Academy is a middle school with 119 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 56% Black, 36% Hispanic, 1% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 86.8%.

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**	**Proficient**
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
The principal has structures to communicate high expectations of teaching and learning in multiple ways. Teachers work with students and families on the expectations of next steps towards college and career preparedness.

Impact
The school has conveyed academic expectations that are supported by school leaders, staff, students and families while providing the necessary supports in order for all to meet them.

Supporting Evidence

- Students and staff recite a daily pledge focused on four principles: commitment, excellence, endurance, and triumph. Through this affirmation, the school consistently reminds stakeholders of the expectations in a rigorous learning community focused on excellence while perfecting the crafts of teaching and learning.

- The principal consistently reports on progress towards goals and new initiatives. Administrative cabinet meetings are utilized to discuss classroom observation trends, professional development supports, and the increase in effective attributes in teacher practice as measured by the Danielson Framework. For example, additional support what was provided to teachers in lesson planning and preparation in order to highlight the attributes of effective planning to support classroom instruction.

- Parents receive quarterly progress reports and have access to Jupiter grades, an online program, in order to get information on their child's progress towards unit, grade, and school goals. Parents have access to teachers via email, parent engagement time, and scheduling appointments in order to discuss the child's performance as well as supports to strengthen the school -home connection.

- Monthly calendars and parent workshops are high leverage practices that support students and families. The school has proactively reached out to families in order to provide them more information on academic behaviors essential for success. Workshops concerning organization, endurance, and persistence and where those skills embedded in student work assignments has led to an increase in the number of parent participants at school meetings providing additional support to students engaged in more demanding curricula.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings

Instructional practices are aligned to support the demands of the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) however; effective teaching strategies are uneven across most classrooms.

Impact

The inconsistency of highly effective teaching practices limit students' opportunities to engage in demanding curricula and performance tasks, lessening their ability to produce high-quality work.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's core beliefs about student learning focus on increasing rigor in order to prepare students for college and career. The use of the Danielson Framework serves as a guide to implement effective teaching strategies to ensure student engagement with demanding curricula.

- Direct and differentiated instruction, 2-task questions which require students to demonstrate knowledge of more than one skill in order to complete an assigned task, real life application, guided practice, and writing critically are common instructional practices of emphasis this year. However in most classrooms, students were grouped but completed the same tasks. Teachers monitored group work but in several observed classes, student struggled with minimal support lessening their ability to complete work.

- In most classrooms, student discussion was limited by the types of questions asked by the teacher and/or the assigned task. For example, in a grade 6 English language arts class, students were asked to analyze in informational text selection. Questions asked "What is a famous Brooklyn landmark?", "What do you notice about the structure of the text?" or "What text features do you see?" did not engage students in high level of student discourse nor provide them the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to use higher order thinking skills.

- Students receive written feedback from teachers with the next steps to improve their work. However in most classes, teachers had no clear structures on how to capture feedback provided as a monitored group work in order to follow up in subsequent conferences with students missing opportunities to be more targeted and analyzing student work and providing supports.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the CCLS and state standards. Performance tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills.

Impact

The school has ensured that curricula are demanding and coherent from grade to grade providing multiple opportunities for all students to demonstrate critical thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Scholastic's *Common Code X* for ELA and Pearson's *Connected Mathematics Project 3* (CMP3) are utilized and aligned to the CCLS. Other content areas use New York State (NYS) scope and sequence to enhance units of study so they are demanding and rigorous. Science teachers are also using the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) to incorporate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) standards in an integrated approach.

- Rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills are embedded in common performance tasks. Rubrics are used in order to support students while they strengthen their self-assessment capacity while teachers utilize them as formative assessments. Teachers utilize the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) order to provide multiple types of questions posed to students focused on including several higher level questions in Levels 3 and 4.

- In order to increase the volume of student writing, additional lessons are planned in all content areas. Teams discuss ELA skills and strategies that should be prevalent across other content areas. For example, students are required written explanations of processes utilized to solve word problems and reflect on their learning of new material.

- The school has adopted critical thinking and critique, open ended response and modality, real-world application, and explanation/engagement (CORE) across grades and for all learners. For example, reviewed units of study and lessons included opportunities for students to debate, discuss and provide flexible groupings based on data.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The school has aligned its use of common assessments and grading policies to provide feedback staff, and students. Teachers utilize the data to determine progress towards school goals.

Impact
Feedback to students and teachers based on assessments and grading is more strategic enabling the school to be more precise in measuring student progress in order to adjust curricula and teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes running records, periodic assessments, and unit tests, performance tasks and portfolios to support its assessment program. Recent data has revealed students continue to struggle with instructional shifts in the CCLS. Teachers have analyzed data to determine instructional strategies to use to promote higher learning abilities to set goals. For example, the decision to increase the volume of student writing was based on students' results on extended and short responses on performance tasks.

- School review and revise its grading policy to align with the more rigorous curricula and performance tasks. Emphasis has been placed on unifying the grading policy across all courses in order to more effectively communicate student progress to teachers, students, and families.

- The school has implemented portfolio assessments that allow teachers additional opportunities of formative assessment that informs their instructional practices and strengthening students' capacity to self-assess allowing more effective adjustments to curricula and instructional practices leading to student mastery.

- Teachers utilize created assessments that are linked to standards giving teaches the ability to analyze additional data sets based on class needs. Teachers utilize item banks from various sources to create rigorous assessments in order to determine individual student needs and progress.

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

Findings
All teachers participate in inquiry work. Teacher teams review and analyze data and student work consistently.

Impact
The instructional capacity of teachers to analyze student data has improved making them more focused on improving student progress and student learning experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate in professional collaborations based on content/grade assignment. Teachers utilize a school-wide expectation template in order to ensure team effectiveness. Templates also used to identify subgroups including the bottom third in order to identify at risk students and to establish goals and action plans to accelerate student learning.

- In order to strengthening teachers capacity in reviewing data, professional development on the instructional inquiry cycle and how student data drives instruction has led to an increase in data usage by teachers resulting in more accurate student grouping and adjustments to units of study.

- The school has three teacher teams that meet once a week to develop and implement school-wide instructional practices embedded in the CCLS. The ELA/Social Studies team discussed the expectations of grade 8 writing. The team also discussed skills students needed in order to complete performance tasks and reviewing questions for clarity and its alignment to what skill is being measured. This resulted in changing the wording of several questions and teachers talking through the required skills necessary in order to successfully complete tasks.