



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Ebbets Field Middle School**

**Middle School K352**

**46 Mckeever Place  
Brooklyn  
NY 11225**

**Principal: Margaret Baker**

**Date of review: December 10, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Clarence G. Ellis**

Ebbets Field Middle School is a middle school with 245 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 72% Black, 23% Hispanic, 4% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 89%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Developing</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Across the school, teachers participate in structured teacher teams which address the instructional focus and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams promote teacher leadership opportunities and voice within instructional decisions.

### Impact

Inquiry-team collaborations are building teacher capacity which is leading to student progress. Distributive leadership structures allow teachers to make key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- During teacher team meetings, teachers plan for the implementation of the workshop model, as well as plan tasks that require students to provide text-based evidence. Upon completion of the teacher team meetings, lead teachers and peer instructional coaches meet with the school leadership to discuss concerns, student performance trends, and how these findings can be used to adjust and refine instruction. Additionally, teachers are collaboratively planning lessons and tasks that incorporate the school's instructional focus, which is to increase comprehension by making connections to background knowledge and to strengthen the use of academic vocabulary in order to support student learning. For example, during the teacher team meeting, seventh and eighth grade teachers planned to deliver parts of their lesson via Socratic Circles, as this requires students to ask and answer questions, make connections, and encourages the use of academic vocabulary.
- Teacher teams serve as a "best practice lab", where teachers have the opportunity to share and observe best teaching practices. For example, one teacher who was identified for consistently incorporating high level questions and checks for understanding during instruction was showcased during the Monday afterschool professional learning sessions.
- During both teacher team meetings, teachers shared that the building leadership fosters a culture that highlights commendable teacher practices, and allows the teacher teams to contribute to the professional development plans. This model, along with the use of peer instructional coaches, has created an environment of ongoing adult learning.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

### Findings

The school is beginning to employ the use of common assessments and checks for understanding to measure student progress towards goals across grades.

### Impact

Although the school has created structures to measure student learning, these structures do not consistently lead to the necessary adjustments that address students' learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- The schools uses a variety of common assessments, such as periodic assessments, unit tests in literacy and math, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), and state assessments to track student progress and the data results are used to refine teaching strategies and target specific learning skills. However, the school has inconsistently gathered information from these sources to address individual progress in all subjects for all students. For example, one eighth grade teacher adjusted her lesson to support the grammar, usage, and mechanics within student writing, as this was determined to be a need based on unit end assessment for literacy. Another eighth grade teacher did not make a similar adjustment, although her students displayed the same area of concern.
- Although teachers and administrators have access to data from formative and summative assessments, as well as, individual student work products, they inconsistently utilize the information gleaned from these sources to make effective curricula and instructional adjustments. For instance formative assessment results indicate that the students display issues with multi-step writing tasks. The lesson plans for seventh grade literacy allow for multi-step responses, specifically text-based responses, and then analysis of the interaction of story elements. One seventh grade teacher focused on this during instruction, while another teacher visited, did not.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of ongoing checks for understanding, including asking and answering questions, as well as student self-assessments, inconsistently lead to instructional adjustments that address all learners especially English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. During one classroom visit, the checks for understanding for academic vocabulary was the use of the "fist to five" and a mid-lesson interruption, while in another classroom, there were minimal checks for understanding.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school has aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) with the integration of the instructional shifts. Critical thinking skills and analysis are consistently emphasized and coherently planned for all learners across grades and subjects.

### Impact

The curricular planning promotes coherence which ensures that students are college and career ready. Tasks across grades and content areas encourage thinking for all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- Literacy planning units emphasize citation of text-based evidence to support analysis of literary texts, analysis of story elements, determining themes or central ideas of informational text, determining author's purpose in informational text, including deepening comprehension and academic language acquisition. For example in a grade 6 unit plan, the long term targets are for the students to determine a theme or the central ideas of informational text, as well as to determine author's point of view or purpose while analyzing Sojourner Truth's "*Ain't I a Woman?*"
- Lesson plans and curriculum maps indicate that the school uses Common Core Learning Standards, Engage New York, and Expeditionary Learning, as well as, the core scope and sequence for social studies and science. The school employs the use of the workshop model across content areas, inclusive of flexible grouping based on student performance, literacy and linguistic abilities, as a means to promote student engagement. This strategy, along with "trans-languaging" (a researched-based initiative by Nice and Garcia), is employed to support the learning needs of ELLs through comprehensive inputs and directives in the eleven native languages spoken at the school. At the onset of the lesson, after the introduction of academic vocabulary, translations are provided along with linguistic scaffolds, such as: double-sided journals and bilingual glossaries. Furthermore, the curriculum provides supports with dictionaries and summaries in students' native languages.
- Across classrooms, teacher planning of scaffolds that support ELLs and students with disabilities was evident within lesson plans reviewed. For example, scaffolds for ELLs included Spanish translations, dictionaries in Haitian Creole, Spanish, and Arabic. Scaffolds for students with disabilities included calculators, sentence starters, and use of laptop computers. All teachers' plans included long-term targets, ongoing assessments, and vocabulary focus for each lesson. For example, long-term targets included: determine theme of central ideas of informational text and analyze the theme throughout the text, and analyze the interaction of literary elements of a story. The school has also been focusing on questioning to ensure that it is engaging and encourages students' thinking. For example, within a literacy lesson plan, the teacher pre-planned questions such as: "*What would we need to know has happened before and after the quote?*" with a follow-up question, "*why is this important?*", in an effort to encourage further thinking about the content.

**Findings**

The school has started to align teaching practices with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and some instructional supports are delivered, however, the focus upon multiple entry points and the use of instructional shifts are inconsistent.

**Impact**

Since pedagogy is beginning to align practices that focus on the instructional shifts, the inconsistencies result in uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks that promote students' demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school believes that students learn best when there are clear and rigorous tasks, high expectations, and explicit instruction that include hands-on activities that can be adapted to meet cultural, academic-readiness, and linguistic needs. In a literacy class, the teacher used a choral response technique, followed by all students engaging in partner reading to discuss the interpretation of a text. However, this strategy was not implemented consistently across classrooms visited. For example, in a sixth grade math class, students were focused on representing ratios and ratio tables using graphs and were asked by the teacher to explain their strategies to solve the problems. However, less than half of the students were able to answer all of the questions and explain the process.
- An eighth grade teacher conducted a lesson that was rigorous that provided differentiated and tiered support to all of her students. During this lesson, the teacher tailored a timed "Do Now" tasks which provided students with grammar, usage, and mechanics support and encouraged students to reference the multi-lingual word wall as they worked on tiered tasks. Conversely, in another classroom, students studied a political cartoon on the French and Indian War; where there were several missed opportunities to pose high level questions and provide entry points to support students' needs. Upon showing a video, the teacher asked the students to answer questions such as: "What does the alphabet stand for?" "Why are they referred to as a disjointed snake?" "What does the caption mean?" This level of questioning did not promote students' demonstration of critical thinking within the provided task.
- Within a sixth grade science class, students were asked to identify and analyze the importance of structure and function of plant organelles. The students used microscopes to identify and examine parts of a leaf then documented their findings. During this lesson, there was evidence of student inquiry, hands-on engagement, peer discussion, tutoring, as well as individual conferencing. However, during a seventh grade literacy lesson focused on "*Working Conditions in the Mills*," the teacher asked a low level, informational question such as: "What was the character's problem?", which lacked rigor and resulted in limited student engagement.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders inconsistently communicate high expectations for teaching and learning through teacher training, aligned to the Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*. The school is developing systems to provide families information regarding student progress towards college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

Although school leaders provide professional learning opportunities for teachers aligned to pedagogical needs, the school is in the process of developing a system of accountability for those expectations. As a result of the school's inconsistent communication, families are unclear of college and career expectations and their children's progress towards those goals.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school has identified questioning and discussion techniques as an area of concern, however, four out of seven teachers visited did not emphasize this during lessons observed. During visits, teacher questioning and discussion techniques ranged from "Let's go back to the explanation part, or how can we improve it?" which stimulated discussion to "Which side won the war?" but limited discussions amongst students and did not demonstrate how teachers are employing questioning strategies presented during professional learning sessions.
- Parents shared that they are informed of their children's progress through telephone calls, Skedula and Pupil Path, an on-line communication resource, as well as robo calls, emails, letters home, progress reports, and a school newsletter. However, individual student needs are inconsistently shared with parents. Most parents had very limited understanding of the Common Core Learning Standards expectations and its connection to their children's academic achievement. Furthermore, parents were unable to share next steps for their children's learning, with few resources for reinforcement at home. While the school provides workshops for parents, there is limited emphasis on providing more-in-depth Common Core Learning Standard supports, to enable parents to better assist their children at home.
- Although teachers shared that the school leadership supports their development through ongoing professional learning opportunities, such as the *Ambassadors Program*, the special education liaison program offered through their network, and are focused on high expectations through modeling and inter-visitations, and high leverage feedback, a synchronized inter-visitation schedule and program has yet to be developed. Currently, teachers go for monthly professional development meetings and are encouraged to turnkey trainings for the rest of the staff; however, evidence of these practices was limited during visits to classrooms.