



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Brownsville Collaborative Middle School

Middle School K363

**85 Watkins Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Stacey Walsh

**Date of review: November 17, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Mauriciere de Govia**

The School Context

Brownsville Collaborative Middle School is a middle school with 144 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 71% Black, 27% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 40% of the students enrolled and girls account for 60%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 87.8%.

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
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Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that prioritize opportunities for distributive leadership and teacher leadership.

Impact

Teachers are participants and leaders on teams fostering an instructional agenda that gives them a voice in key decisions that impact students' learning throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shared that “Teacher teams are an integral structure...We are believers of collaboration and teacher teams provide this opportunity.” A review of the schedule and budget revealed that resources are pooled to support multiple opportunities for teachers to meet on a weekly basis for curriculum development, professional learning, and analyzing student work products and data. Additionally, the school has funded a partnership with Cambridge, a professional development provider. A review of agendas, minutes, and teacher logs revealed that teachers' team time and professional development with this provider has been dedicated to familiarizing teachers with the Common Core Learning Standards, supporting teacher development of modified lessons, creating multiple entry points for learners, using assessments to determine instructional steps, and using rubrics to encourage learners' self-assessing.
- Teacher teams at the school follow a strict monthly schedule that allows them to use the team time for multiple purposes. During week one of the month, teachers bring student data to the table to assess where students are meeting/missing the achievement goals. To support this work the teachers use the text *Looking at Student Work Together*. During week two of the month, teachers check for progress. In week three of the month, teachers review new data and determine how the information impacts curriculum and in week four of the month, teachers review professional publications and research that can assist them in solving their challenge. Aligned to these expectations, the math team was observed reviewing a professional text via a protocol and was determining how to incorporate literacy into math program using a picture book.
- There are evident distributive leadership structures in the school that foster teacher leadership and ownership of students' achievement. For example, there are departmental common planning teacher teams that meet weekly with assigned roles such as lead teacher, facilitator, note-taker, and timekeeper to promote leadership and share responsibility for tasks such as curriculum development and data analysis. A review of team agendas revealed that teachers meet frequently to discuss students' progress and the alignment of lesson plans across content areas. These teacher teams are supported by an onsite staff developer who liaisons between the principal and the teachers, to enact instructional next steps with all stakeholders. Furthermore, there are structures in place for lead teachers to communicate with the administration and the onsite staff developer to advocate for teachers' professional needs.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teaching practices are becoming aligned to a set of beliefs about how students learn best, while inconsistently providing access to the curricula via multiple entry points for all learners.

Impact

All learners, including English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities are unevenly engaged and have limited access to challenging tasks in the curricula, as a result of teaching practices that limits access to the instructional shifts and aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal shared that the school has two-tier instructional foci that are anchored in the Danielson Framework for Teaching focused on three competencies including, 2b-establishing a culture for learning, 3b-questioning and discussion, and 3d-assessments and checks for understanding. The goal of the first tier is for all teachers to incorporate various methods of checking for understanding during lessons and formative assessment during and at the end of lessons that provide actionable data related to scholars' needs to inform targeted feedback to scholars and curricular and instructional adjustments. The goal of the second tier is for all teachers to incorporate cohesive practices across classrooms that support literacy acquisition and proficiency for all scholars. These expectations were inconsistently observed in classrooms. In an eighth grade English language arts (ELA) Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, students worked in centers to launch the unit on "Survival". Although the co-teachers observed the students working and kept them navigating through the groups, they never sat to confer or assess. Furthermore, students were not observed annotating or using other techniques to track their own reading. In a grade eight math class, students used whiteboards to show the teacher their answers and processes to solve the presented linear equation. Many students called out answers at the same time as the teacher selected students one-by-one to come to the board and explain their answers. As students wrote their answers on the board, some audience members spoke over them and corrected them while others sat quietly watching.
- Across classrooms there were inconsistent opportunities for students to access the curricula via multiple entry points. For example, in an eighth grade social studies class an English language learner was observed sitting alone, disengaged from the lesson with no modified tools to access the lesson. In an eighth grade ELA class, students were able to be immersed in a new topic via participating in centers that had different modes of learning such as using text, watching a video, and looking at pictures.
- The school is a participant in the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) that focuses on increasing the rigor in the school via incorporation of the instructional shifts. Teachers were observed using the worksheets with students, but not teaching into the content of the worksheet. For example, in a seventh grade MSQI class students were observed filling out the vocabulary worksheets and answering the questions in numerical order by filling in the blanks via the teacher asking, "Who has the answer for number 1...number 2?" Therefore, this limits students' access to engaging with the instructional shift of engaging with complex text and its academic vocabulary.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school uses common assessments aligned to the school's curricula to determine students' performance and progress towards goals. Teachers use rubrics and follow the school-wide grading policy to provide feedback to students.

Impact

Teachers use common assessments for all learners to determine curricula and differentiated instructional steps with access to the use of rubrics and a grading policy.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses many common assessments to track and determine students' progress and performance. There is supporting evidence that this practice occurs school-wide and in the classroom. Students also take Periodic Assessments in the fall to create a baseline of performance and then again in the spring to track progress. The school uses the Degrees of Reading Protocol (DRP), which is a vocabulary-based assessment that is administered three times a year. A reading comprehension assessment via Running Records is conducted on an ongoing basis, and the state test simulations for English language arts (ELA) and math are administered twice a year. Furthermore, the school has acquired student non-attendance days to engage staff in professional learning to administer the ELA Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessments to ensure effective norming and scoring practices, and transference to impact curricula and instruction adjustments.
- The school aligns assessments to curricula and analyzes data to improve scholar learning on a regular basis. To support this effort, there are several assessment systems in place that collect and monitor common assessment practices and administration in the school. The school assessment calendar chronicles the dates, assessments, grade/population, subject, purpose, methodology, and extensions for the school year ensuring that all teachers are aligned in delivering their assessments and receiving student performance data for discussion in teacher teams. A flow chart, supported by their partnership with Generation Ready, guides teachers and school leaders to tier students using a Response to Intervention model ensuring student placement based on scores guide types of intervention they require according to their learning needs. To determine the latter, the teachers employ the use of the school's Response to Intervention Action Plan that defines the various tiers, provides a tier two and three student intervention plan, and conference summaries to collect students' academic performance, parent concerns, and recommendations.
- The expected use of rubrics and the grading policy is outlined in the Faculty Handbook. Across classrooms, teachers employed the use of rubrics to guide students as they accomplished tasks. In a sixth grade science class, the rubric was on the board and it indicated how the students could achieve mastery. Students' work posted on bulletin boards also showed connections to rubric usage as teachers' actionable feedback connected the students' work to the rubric on the board. A student shared that "Our teachers gives us rubrics so we can know what to do to get a better grade." Another student said, "One time I got a 2 and I didn't follow the rubric and my teacher worked me with using the rubric, so next time I got a 3." Students also talked about using Engrade, an online system to monitor their grades and progress. A student shared, "I know if I'm getting a 4 it's in the 90's, so that's good."

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, incorporating the instructional shifts and emphasizing rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Across subjects and grades, school leaders and faculty integrate the curricula with promoting coherence and college and career readiness for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs).

Supporting Evidence

- The school selected Common Core Learning Standards-aligned curriculum to drive their instructional program. Scholastic’s Codex program is used for English language arts instruction and CMP3 is used for math instruction. Through the use of protocols and scheduled teacher planning time, the teachers refine curriculum based on students’ assessment results and learning needs. Furthermore, the school employs the Understanding by Design model to create unit plans across grades and content areas that are aligned to the curriculum.
- The school has a partnership with Cambridge Education to support curriculum and assessment practices that impact students’ achievement. A review of curriculum maps reveals that the teachers and this partner have worked closely to unpack and understand the Common Core Learning Standards, develop a scope and sequence of curriculum for English language arts, math, science, and social studies, and differentiate curricula to meet the needs of all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Furthermore, the partnership has fostered the development of instructional coherence in the school where the unit themes and essential questions are linked across content areas, as are the assessments, Universal Learning Design practices, and academic tasks.
- A review of several lesson plans across content areas and populations indicates that teachers are rigorously planning and thinking about Depth of Knowledge questions to reach all four levels of questioning. In math lesson plans, teachers plan math drills to build mathematical fluency as aligned to the instructional shifts. Also evident in the lesson plans, is planning for access to the curriculum for all students, through the use of whole class discussions, paired student discussions, learning stations, and graphic organizers. Teachers’ plans also have supporting worksheets attached along with planned groups, enumerating the students who need scaffolded learning, the students who need a more challenging task, plus planned resolutions for possible student misunderstandings, and exit ticket assessments.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate high expectations to the parents and students that are connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Parents receive information that helps them understand their children’s academic progress and students receive supports that prepare them for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that high expectations are defined via the school’s habits of mind of REACH, which stands for “Resilience, Empathy, Advocacy, Collaboration, and Honor”. When asked, the teachers, parents, and students are able to recite and define each of those attributes and how those expectations are connected to college and career readiness. REACH is foundational to the school and guides how it operates and engages students in learning and character building. There are REACH posters throughout the school, as well as mentorships via the “Overcoming Obstacles” program for scholars.
- The school has strong communication streams for all stakeholders to ensure that feedback, expectations, and guidance for students to get to the next grade level are apparent. Progress Reports are sent home monthly to communicate students’ performance across content areas. Parents and students also have access to Engrade Pro, an online tracking tool that allows teachers and parents to communicate, monitor students’ grades, and note accomplished, as well as missing, assignments. Parents and students supported their school’s approach to attaining high expectations with statements such as, “They want my child to succeed” and “They keep us parents informed with progress reports and Engrade.” Other statements include, “I get alerted on my phone if she missing something. It’s great!” and “They have an open door policy...Teachers call and text you all the time.” Students agreed, stating, “My mother always knows what going on because of Engrade.”
- The principal shared that the school, “Supports our scholars with their progression towards academic standards without compromising quality.” In conjunction with this statement, the school possesses many quality programs and supports that guide students on a track to college and career readiness. For example, the guidance counselor in partnership with “High School Match” supports seventh and eighth grade students with the high school application process, including supporting education in the home, school visits, and tours. Furthermore, there are several curricula-field experiences for students that connects them with colleges and careers, such as connections to teaching artists, the Bio Bus experience for science exploration, a trip to the math museum for hands-on problem solving, and trips to the Lower East Side Tenement and Washington, DC to support the social studies curriculum and government careers.