



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ronald Edmonds Learning Center II

Middle School K484

**430 Howard Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: Michele Luard

**Date of review: March 4, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Clarence G. Ellis**

The School Context

M.S. 484 is a middle school with 141 students from grade six through grade eight. The school population comprises 84% Black, 14% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 13% 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 90.3%.

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
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across the school, horizontal and vertical teams engage in structures, inquiry-based professional collaborations using assessment data and student work.

Impact

Inquiry-based professional collaborations result in improved pedagogy, coherent implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and progress for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly, and have developed structures designed to plan, trouble shoot, and refine teacher practice. Additional structures include using agendas, minutes, and supplemental material, such as professional articles to support progress toward Common Core Learning Standards related goals. The focus of the meetings have been to analyze student work, including exit tickets, assessments, and assignments. Particular attention has been paid to student exit tickets to ensure that they are aligned to the Focus Question. Additionally, the group conducted a gap analysis to uncover issues that have surfaced pertaining to gaps between the students' ability to make text-based responses, and the actual complexity of the text. The facilitator recorder these gaps and related findings and they discussed next steps to support the students based on their needs.
- The school leader supports and builds capacity through providing the minimum of once a week professional learning facilitated by the schools assigned Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) specialist, teacher leaders, administrators, and network staff. This has led to increased opportunities for teachers to learn instructional strategies which could be used to reteach lessons and colleagues that resulted in an increase of student mastery toward school goals as observed when reviewing school artifacts such as sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teacher grade books, baseline, and subsequent school year data.
- A review of minutes across the school year demonstrate how horizontal and vertical teacher teams analyze common assessments to determine areas in which students either meet the standard or require further support. Additionally, teachers share strategies to improve instructional delivery during lessons. For example, during the teacher team meeting, teachers shared that they engage in inter-visitations, and model best practice for one another to strengthen pedagogy throughout the school. This has resulted in improvement of instruction. A review of teacher observations indicates that the majority of teachers are trending in the effective category.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school has started to align teaching practices with a set of beliefs about how students learn best and some instructional supports are delivered the focus upon multiple entry points these practices lack consistency across classrooms.

Impact

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

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers believe that students learn best when they are engaged in tasks which requires higher order thinking skills questions and discussion. In a sixth grade class, the teacher asked students several questions such as, "What do experiences with others teach people about themselves? What is an example of that?" Various students responded to the questions. The teacher asked all students to go back into the text to find evidence. The students were citing from the poem *Ode to Family Photography's* by Gray Soto. As students responded they cited support from the text.
- During a seventh grade math lesson, students were engaged in question and discussion with the teacher. The teacher discussed ways to solve linear inequalities using addition and subtraction. The teacher discussed ways to identify the value of x in the equation, $5x-8=12$. One student responded, "I think x represents the number 5." The teacher asked students to review responses from their peers and state whether you agree or disagree and why. The answers and comments were varied and the students demonstrated inconsistent degrees of understanding the concepts.
- During an eighth grade English language arts lesson, students were instructed to turn and talk to their partners to discuss how do pictures compare and contrast to one another and support their evidence. The students were observed in discussion with one another, then asking one another their opinion of homeless people before and after reading the text, *I've Been Homeless for Six Years*. The teachers circulated throughout the classroom while recording notes on a chart. The teacher then asked students to share their thoughts with the class while citing evidence from the text. However, in another seventh grade English language arts lesson, the lesson was teacher dominated, and the student discussion did not offer high levels of cognitive engagement.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and teachers effectively align curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and ensure the integration of the instructional shifts. School-wide, teachers utilize student work and data to plan and refine curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

The use of curricula had provided coherence across all grades and college and career readiness skill for students. The planning and refinement of units and academic tasks, based on the needs of all learners, has provided students with access to learning opportunities in which they are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly in horizontal and vertical teams to examine Common Core aligned units of study, student work, analyze data, and adjust lesson plans which results in differentiated tasks which provide multiple entry points for all learners. For example, an eighth grade lesson listed refinements for students who were having difficulty with solving linear equations with combining like terms. Additional differentiated tasks were created to support English language learners, namely the use of manipulatives to combine like terms, as well as leveled exercises for students with disabilities, as the concept must be known for the grade level.
- The reading, math, science, and social studies units of study are closely aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards instructional shifts. Additionally, the school utilizes Codex for English language arts, and Cmp3, supplemented by Engage NY for math curricula. Examples of student tasks that align to the shifts were evident in teacher lesson plans, such as, responding to questions using textual evidence, determining two or more central ideas in the text and analyze their development over the course of the text, and opportunities for students to engage in accountable talk in groups, or in pair or triads. For example a sixth grade unit of study indicates working as a group to answer a problem using textual evidence, evaluate via rubric, and explain reasoning.
- Lesson plans in all content areas reinforce higher order thinking skills and represent various instructional strategies such as turn and talk, citing textual evidence, and the use of graphic organizers. For example, within a seventh grade teacher's plan, students were required to work in different work stations, then turn and talk using pre-planned questions aligned to the lesson focus, while creating a Venn diagram to compare and contrast photosynthesis and respiration. The lesson plan also reflected evidence of questions that students could have following the mid-lesson interruption. The teacher collected data and follow up based on these findings.

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. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

The use of assessments has led to actionable next steps so students and teachers are aware of areas in need of improvement. Assessments are used to inform curricula and instructional groupings.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, rubrics are aligned to the school's grading policy. During an interview, one student stated, "When we are about to finish a project, our teacher makes sure that we are following a three point rubric so we can know if we are successful, or what we need to get there." As a result, students are able to plan next steps independently, with peers, or with the teacher which has led to an improvement in the learning process. This was evident during the interview; as another student stated, "I know what I need to improve upon and next steps since the teacher writes to tell me what I need to do to get to the next level."
- Teachers use the Codex, Cmp3, Engage NY, unit-end assessments, and periodic assessments to demonstrate student growth. During an interview with members of the vertical teacher team, it was stated that assessments take place regularly to ascertain student strengths and areas of need. All teachers and students maintain assessments folders in which student progress is tracked for further supports including intervention, reteaching, remediation or enrichment. The assessments uncovered that students' needed support with academic vocabulary, grammar and usage, citing evident, writing from sources, and fluency with multi-step math word problems.
- It is evident that feedback is given to students, both verbally and in writing. Additionally, students engage in individual and peer assessments. While visiting classrooms and reviewing work portfolios, actionable, rubric-based feedback with next steps was written on all student work samples. For example, a student was told that she cited evidence appropriately, but needed to give more specifics when writing it.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for teaching and professional development that is aligned to the college and career readiness path. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students. The school is in the process of expanding a system to engage more parents in the community.

Impact

School leaders have a system for holding staff accountable; as such staff is fully aware of school-wide instructional expectations. The school ensures that students and families are provided with feedback regarding student progress so they are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- During interviews, parents stated that information is communicated to them via Tuesday parent meetings, school calendar, phone-master, phone calls, school and class newsletters, and memorandums from the principal and teachers. For example, one parent shared, “I am consistently informed about my child’s progress and needs.”
- School leaders provide ongoing feedback to teachers which highlight strengths and areas of need. The principal stated that she gives educational articles and a resources list to staff in order to help them address targeted areas of their instructional delivery of planning. She also encourages the teachers to engage in inter-visitations and learning walks with colleagues utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching as a tool which calibrates the visit. The principal conducts snapshots of teacher practice which allows her to give immediate feedback upon the conclusion of the visit. The principal then coordinates teacher leaders and network staff to support teachers individually or in small groups. These observations highlight trends of improvement in the areas of questioning and discussion techniques and student engagement.
- Every school year, the school leader distributes expectation handbooks to students, parents, and staff. The school community also participates in a *Get to Know Your School Night*, *Meet the Teacher Night*, and *Community Celebrations*. The students recite the school mantra CLEAR, which stands for, “Community, Leadership, Excellence, Accountability, and Respect.” Additionally, each Friday Town Hall meetings are held celebrating student achievement and commendable behavior. Gender-specific Town Hall meetings are held as well.