



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Middle School of Marketing and Legal Studies

Middle School K598

**905 Winthrop Street
Brooklyn
NY 11203**

Principal: Jameela Horton

**Date of review: January 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Tracey L. Collins**

The School Context

Middle School for Marketing and Legal Studies is a middle school with 241 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 93% Black, 5% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The principal's passion and motivation permeate the learning environment. Effective structures and systems are in place to consistently communicate high expectations to students, staff, and families.

Impact

Pathways to college and career readiness are internalized and articulated by all members of the school community in a culture of mutual accountability providing a clear path for students to college and career.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers serve as academic advisors, meeting weekly with five to 12 students. Advisors utilize Skedula's online grading and anecdotal system when meeting with students to conduct academic conferences. Advisors share up-to-date information with students and assist them in analyzing their academic and behavioral data to set and revise goals. In addition to parent-teacher conferences, grade specific parent meetings are also scheduled based on need or by request, resulting in the collaborative development of Individual Student Action Plans. These plans are designed to help improve academic and social-emotional outcomes.
- All eighth graders participate in a High School/College Exploration Program in the fall. The guidance counselor and teachers assist students in using their individual student data to research and select a range of high schools aligned to their college and career interests. Students rank their top six schools and provide supporting evidence to substantiate their selections. In addition, the guidance counselor conducts a series of workshops on the admissions process and the nuts and bolts of college and career awareness to further assist parents and students in successfully completing the application process.
- To support the social-emotional development of all students and promote school wide literacy, the school has established a Book of the Month initiative. Selected books incorporate themes such as homelessness, acceptance and tolerance. Students are introduced to the text on the first Monday of each month. The dean of instruction conducts a read aloud from the featured book during the Daily Morning Meeting. In advisory, students review excerpts from the text and provide written responses to key questions designed to promote student-to-student discussion and help students make text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections.
- The principal provides each faculty member with a staff handbook and the MLS Daily Staff Memo. The daily staff memo communicates expectations and key information to help ensure that staff is aware of upcoming events, timelines, celebrations and acknowledgements such as weekly Word Generation topics, academic focus words for the week, curriculum night information, and high school application workshops for parents and students.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and assessment practices that consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment to make effective adjustments that meet all students' learning needs.

Impact

Teachers and students are able to gauge next steps and make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs, yet a review of student portfolios revealed graded student work with limited feedback to some students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers evaluate benchmark exams, teacher assessments, and Diagnostic Reading Assessment results with correlated Lexile levels. This information along with other student data is used to determine strengths and areas of need by grade, class, small groups and individual students. During the data analysis process, teachers complete a Teacher Data Analysis Reflection Sheet outlining standards that require additional instructional time, pinpointing areas where students need extra support or challenge and instructional strategies to incorporate in future lessons. Teachers also develop Individual Education Plan Accommodation Charts and Risk Level Charts containing eight risk levels. This information is used for instructional groupings of all students including English language learners and students with disabilities.
- Teacher teams review student work to adjust instructional practices. For example, during a vertical teacher team meeting, each teacher brought a high, medium, and low piece of graded student work to review. After reviewing the student work, teachers discussed commonalities and planned to integrate additional strategies to strengthen students' counterclaims in their argumentative writing.
- In all seven classes visited, teachers used common formative assessments across subject areas, such as stop and jot, daily reflections sheets, and exit slips, to consistently check for understanding.
- Across classrooms students complete Instructional Reflection Logs at the end of each lesson. Through this reflective process students explain new ideas and understandings learned, provide a specific example and indicate questions, wonderings or struggles they may have. This information is used to help teachers and students identify next learning steps. However, across classrooms, student portfolios with completed work do not yet evidence feedback that provides students with clear next steps.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and promote higher order thinking across grades and content areas.

Impact

The school's curricula push students' thinking and promote college and career readiness across grades and content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, such as Expeditionary Learning and Word Generation to help strengthen students' reading and writing skills. Math in Focus helps provide a platform for students to solve problems using various strategies and approaches and the I-Ready program is used to support the incorporation of Common Core aligned tasks that make connections among multiple standards. To promote scientific inquiry and integrate literacy in the content area, the school uses E Science 3000. The social studies curriculum combines literacy and social studies Common Core Learning Standards and is based on the New York State Social Studies Scope and Sequence.
- The school includes argumentative writing and use of academic vocabulary across content areas. For example, the social studies department refined the curriculum to infuse social studies content with reading and writing strategies, use of primary and secondary sources to support students in developing central ideas, and using text-based evidence to develop argumentative stances.
- The school's instructional support team developed a Common Core lesson plan structure. A review of lesson plans shows a focus on student-to-student discussion, checks for understanding, and problem solving. For example, one English language arts lesson plan included research stations and accountable-talk stations. During independent practice, students used the accountable-talk stations to begin formulating their arguments regarding the pros and cons of steroid use among athletes.
- Unit plans in reading incorporate supports for groups of students. For example, in an eighth grade reading unit, students were responsible for writing an objective summary of an article. During independent practice, while students focused on the same understandings and skills, three instructional tasks were matched to specific students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to challenge them and allow them access into the task.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teacher practices provide strategies to serves as entry points for challenging tasks and promoting student discussion.

Impact

Tasks, work products, and classroom discussions, engage students to demonstrate higher-order thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In classes visited, we saw student-to-student discussion, referencing text and using supporting evidence to justify their thinking. For example, in one class visited, after reading an article, students adopted a position. Using a timer on the SMART board to help pace the lesson, students were required to find a piece of evidence which supported their position, record it on a post-it note and explain their position by turning and talking with a partner.
- Teachers served as facilitators in most classes visited. For example, in an eighth grade class visited, during an opening activity, students in groups of three or four came to a consensus on the definition of a literary feature in the text. Using a carousel approach, in small groups, students viewed text related symbols on charts in various stations around the classroom. Based on events from the selected novel, students collaborated further to determine the connection to the main character, explaining their thinking to each other. One student in each group recorded their collective thinking on a post-it note, placing it on the chart for their peers to view as they circulated through the various stations.
- Using a let's talk about math approach; in a seventh grade class visited, students generated equivalent expressions of a real world problem. In small groups, students shared the results with their peers. After agreeing upon the correct answer, they compared solutions discussing similarities and differences.

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

Teacher teams analyze and reflect on assessment data and student work to support making thoughtful adjustments to teacher practice, increase alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, and build teacher capacity.

Impact

Teachers are collaborating, making instructional adjustments to promote the achievement of school goals, and helping each other to impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including agendas, protocols for reviewing and discussing student work, content area analysis plans, and personal reflection logs. The focus of these meetings includes cross-curricular academic vocabulary, citing evidence, and argumentative writing. Additionally, teams of teachers evaluate assessment data and student work to determine next steps for their classes and the content area.
- The principal provides ongoing and specific feedback to teachers, and works with teachers to support instructional foci. For example, in addition to regular classroom observations, the principal collaboratively developed, with a teacher, a Common Core reading and writing lesson to serve as a content area exemplar in English Language Arts. The principal modeled one lesson for the teacher. The teacher facilitated the related lesson in her classroom while colleagues observed. School leadership also worked with the math department to develop assessments, which include multiple questioning styles.
- Content area teacher leaders facilitate common planning periods and mentor new teachers. Teachers also help plan professional development and identify next steps for their content areas. For example, the social studies teacher leader developed a school wide argumentative rubric aligned to Common Core Learning Standards in English language arts and expectations for writing tasks and debates related to the Word Generation cross-curricular program.