



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

School of the Future Brooklyn

Middle School K663

**574 Dumont Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11207**

Principal: Sarah Kaufmann

**Date of review: February 6, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

School of the Future Brooklyn is a middle school with 104 students from grade 6 through grade 7. The school population comprises 66% Black, 30% Hispanic, 1% White, 1% Pacific Islander, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 41% 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 92.6%.

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	Celebration	Well-Developed
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	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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula across grades and subjects.

Impact

As a result, the school leaders and faculty promote both curricular coherence and college and career readiness for all students, ensuring that a diversity of learners can demonstrate their thinking and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- Faculty have selected a format for unit and within subjects, adopted the same lesson planning format ensuring that all use the same components, including enduring understanding, teaching point, mini lesson or mid workshop, collaborative seat work, and summarize and share. Teachers transparently post their curricula on the web-based site. Decisions to build coherence are evident in the aligned curricula maps and unit plans, that demonstrates alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and incorporates the instructional shifts. Examples include real-world tasks, a balance of fiction and nonfiction, multistep problems, and learning like a scientist, historian, or mathematician.
- Staff uses Teachers College Reading Writing Project for English language arts and social studies and CMP3 for math. They also use the New York State scope and sequence with the National Research Council's Framework for science as the core programs from which teachers plan and refine based on student needs. The principal stated, "In order to meet the needs of our students, we rely on planning work with our staff developer to actively modify and support for students." Embedded in the curricula is the school's belief about how students learn best through engaging in active struggle and self-monitoring in order to gain independence. Students are given time to self-reflect on homework, assessments and correct their own work.
- Curricular demonstrates higher order-thinking skills emphasized for a diversity of learners. In a 6th grade research-based information writing unit planning document for daily lessons it provides teaching point, independent task, and MWI share, and states questions such as 'How does this go with what I know about the whole topic', 'what patterns do I notice', and 'what are the important things to say about this overall topic'. An introduction to US history asks questions that spiral upwards in rigor, such as, 'who is in charge', 'how did they get there', 'do we agree', and 'what does it mean for us today'. In a 6th grade math unit called *Comparing Bits and Pieces*, there is a plan to support students with special needs and those who struggle through parallel teaching or pre-teaching number strings.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments aligned with the school's curricula, yet teachers' assessment practices vary in their use of checking for understanding across classrooms.

Impact

Results from common assessments and ongoing checks for understanding are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction to meet the learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that assessment and alignment of curricula as an area of growth, and that ensuring curricula is coherently aligned with checkpoints, especially for math, is the work in progress. Math data showed a beginning of the year baseline, and a mid-year assessment, broken down by grade level and questions. From this data, teachers determined that students required remediation and used this data to inform the revised grouping for power hour in the second semester. However, the translation of this information into the core classroom is unclear. English language arts students were reading at levels L-M and provided with focused emergent reader support. Teachers track student reading levels and use running records at benchmarks to show growth. As a result, teachers were able to move some students increased two to three reading levels to date.
- As a reflection on a lack of student homework submissions, the school focuses on modeling and supporting quality homework. To that end, students use rubrics and checklists to self-assess and determine their own next steps in their work. Students write reflections on sticky notes on their homework and rate it. Some samples are posted on bulletin boards. Samples include comments such as, "This is a Level 5 because I actually spent time on it and went through my process. It shows improvement because last week I was doing Level 3 homework nonstop", and "I am proud of this homework because I showed my thinking and I show strategies." Teacher feedback on assignments range from checkmarks to adjusted scores after student reflections, rubric scores, and comments that are not embedded in the rubric. The feedback given to students and teachers is not consistently actionable. Such comments observed were "Good work", "Once again, beautiful work!" and "It is clear you are putting in so much effort to improving as a reader by reading a lot! Keep up the good work!" and "I love your example of the boy who cried wolf! Keep practicing this and together we will norm on your rubric."
- During classroom visits, teachers inconsistently employed checking for understanding practices. In three of the seven classes visited, teachers intentionally checked for understanding using ongoing methods and made effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs. Some methods used during class visits were think-pair-share and having students share answers or call on peers to share. Also teachers conferenced with students in table groups, and in one class then used student example to modify an instructional adjustment. In one class students self-reflected on short-term goals and shared with a partner. Yet, in the remaining four classes these techniques were not observed.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

Clear messaging and established systems of training and accountability ensure that staff understand expectations and are held accountable by administration. Students and families understand progress made toward goals due to the school's ongoing and detailed feedback, enhancing guidance and advisement supports for the school stakeholders.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff through multiple venues including the staff handbook, emails, and professional development calendar. The administration holds staff accountable through a series of observation cycles that is based on their individual goals, teacher team meeting agendas and minutes from professional collaborative inquiry and provides next steps.
- The principal models the same coaching structure with teachers that teachers use with students. Additionally, the professional development calendar, which was developed, designed, and delivered by teacher leaders and coaches, started over the summer and is a living document, ensuring a constant adjustment to maintain alignment with the school goals, the Danielson Framework for Teaching and school initiatives.
- The administration and staff determined a four-day a week, mixed grade coaching system for students to work with an adult in a reflective conversation whereby students set weekly goals, determine strategies to meet those goals, and bring evidence to support their claim. In all classes, teachers communicate the coaching routine by posting it to remind students of the protocol, which is rooted in research to develop apprenticeships for students to learn grit, encompassing empathy, choice, and resilience. Administration provides clear expectations and research base for teachers around coaching through a specific handbook. The Principal stated that the school's philosophy revolves around students' being self-reflective "rather than rely on constant micro-management by the teacher." Staff and administration believe that these coaching sessions are opportunities for students to make choices about their academic life and getting ready for the next level. Students are held accountable to these goals, states the Principal, "to empower students to face challenges with resilience." Some sample student goals include attending tutoring, coming to class prepared, improving quality of homework, and organizing backpack. Others agreed when a student provided a sample goal as to "participate in science class group and made strategies to achieve it and now my grade improved." Evidence ranges from entries by teachers in the web-based grading system that has student and parent access. However, the principal stated that they are still determining ways to measure success in coaching. Regardless, the relationships with adults that develop from these coaching sessions ensure students are self-reflective and preparing for the next level.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Teachers are working towards consistently providing multiply entry points and discussion into curricula. Across classrooms, student work products did not consistently incorporate rigorous tasks or engage all students in discussions to ensure learners thought deeply about concepts presented.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers are beginning to provide all learners with appropriately challenging tasks. However, the uneven engagement and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products reflects the inconsistent use of multiple entry points.

Supporting Evidence

- Pedagogical strategies were employed inconsistently. In a 6th grade math class, students participated in solving a real-world example of ratios of doughnuts to cost. Students worked out the process through teacher modeling using think-alouds and number string, providing students several opportunities to discuss questions using think-pair-share, and having students call on each other to answer. Conversely, in a 7th grade integrated co-teaching (ICT) math class, it took approximately five minutes for most to settle and take out their homework, while the teachers circulated noting who handed in homework, then students worked on the math now problem. The general education teacher led the lesson while the special education teacher spoke with individual students. Scaffolds were not observed. After a brief mention of probabilities and minimal transition, the teacher said they would play a game making the color purple. Teacher asked for two volunteers but got four, who all remained engaged, while the remainder demonstrated varying degrees of attentive listening and disengagement. The teacher did not employ questioning techniques to provide opportunities for peers to discuss game, rules, goal, or understanding although students sat in groups.
- Across classrooms, engagement in tasks requiring demonstration of higher-order thinking ranged from fully engaged to unproductive. In a 7th grade reading class, all students read leveled fiction books independently, completed high quality jots on sticky notes and timelines about a character from the book, and then completed writing personal reading intentions. These notes and timelines helped students show their thinking as they read. Students then turn and talked to a reading partner about their success and challenges in their personal reading intentions. All students were engaged and participated. Further, in a sixth grade reading class, students continued to analyze nonfiction research in self-selected topics of bullying or child labor. In small groups, students annotated as they read. The teacher checked in with groups and advanced the lesson through connections between the notes in categories. Students had varying levels of notes but were on task. However, in a seventh grade writing class, students were to revise their own essays. Although the teaching strategy employed modeling, student participation and engagement in this self-reflective activity ranged from fully engaged to several demonstrating off task behaviors.
- Across classrooms, discussions and engagement varied. In a 6th grade science class, students observed a demonstration of creating a cloud using their senses to jot notes and several students received an observation sheet, while others wrote on lined paper. Group discussions varied with some students remaining silent and being unengaged in the class. In a 7th grade ICT social studies class, the teacher asked a verbal question to compare two videos' perspective on Thomas Jefferson to be positive or negative. A few students received a scaffolded document; however differentiation was not noted in the lesson plan. Of the students in class, most were writing, including one on a laptop, however, some students were not observed writing and a few did not have paper, pen, or books.

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. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Established inquiry-based collaborative practices promote the achievement of school goals, the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, and strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers. Further, defined leadership structures enable teachers to have a voice in key decisions that promote improved pedagogy and shared leadership with a focus on improvement of student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Administration devised a schedule that ensures teachers meet for inquiry work weekly with both grade and content teams, plus a day of professional development, as well as common planning time during the week. The inquiry work includes using protocols to look at student work and assessments to promote the achievement of school goals. In a math and science team meeting, teachers reviewed sample student work to determine criteria for a learning progression, whereby criteria determine different levels of quality work. Teachers deliberated over potential barriers and solutions. In a discussion, teachers stated that they have grown professionally and collegially from these collaborations.
- Teachers new to the school stated that at first, it took an acclimation to the school protocols of coaching, advisory, and building resilience, but now the strong collegial community helps them develop professionally. Teachers also meet in coaching pairs to provide support in planning and implementing the coaching process. This becomes a mentoring opportunity for teachers to grow professionally.
- Teacher leaders rotate the facilitation of teacher team meetings, ensuring that several teachers develop distributed leadership skills. Grade team leaders meet weekly with the principal around inquiry and achievement of the school mission. Teachers are empowered with a voice in key decisions that affect students across the school. For example, teachers not only lead the professional collaborations in grade team and department meetings, but also meet weekly with the principal to plan and implement initiatives, such as power hour. Power hour is a set time during the school day, to provide remediation for numeracy and literacy as well provides students with electives.