



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

New Heights Middle School

**Middle School K722
790 East New York Avenue
Brooklyn
New York 11203**

Principal: Jessica Luciano

**Date of review: February 24, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Shenean N. Lindsay**

The School Context

MS 722 is a middle school with 233 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 92% Black and 7% Hispanic students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 25% 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 94%.

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

Teachers in the school are engaged in structured professional collaborations in teams, using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved school learning.

Impact

As a result of the work that is happening in teacher teams, the school has structures that support distributive leadership and provides teachers, with a voice and shared decision-making which typically results in improved pedagogy. Through this consistent teacher practice students are achieving and showing progress in acquiring their instructional goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Each grade has a lead teacher that is also a member of the school's instructional cabinet and plays a major role in the schools' decision making in regards to teaching and learning. For example, lead teachers along with the teacher team developed a Rigor Analysis Chart to ensure all tasks are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers use the chart to make adjustments to Individual Student Learning Plans which includes scaffolding strategies to support various learners, including Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners.
- The teacher team meets regularly to review student work, share instructional strategies, adjust curricula and lesson plans to ensure all students make progress. During the teacher team meeting, members were observed engaging in the Looking at Student Work Protocol to adjust a math lesson. Additionally, teacher team members expanded a two day math lesson on distributive property to three days and discussed several instructional strategies for re-teaching the lesson as a result of analysis of student work which indicated many students did not understand the lesson.
- Teacher voice is a vital part of the decision making process. Teachers articulated feeling valued, and gave a few examples of key decisions they were part of, such as changes to the weekly student intervention schedule, participation in horizontal and vertical inter-visitations, and creation of various instructional strategies such as ICE (Introduce your quote, cite, and explain) ice cubes in student essays. As a result, there is expansion of student achievement and pedagogy.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, which leads to uneven levels of engagement.

Impact

Teacher practice that pushes student thinking, engages students with high level questioning, and scaffolds for all learners was inconsistently observed across classrooms. As a result, not all students were able to complete challenging tasks or participate in discussion that promotes higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- During class visits, question and discussion took place across most classrooms. However, many of the questions asked by the teacher were on a procedural level. For example, in an ELA classroom, the teacher asked the students, “What is the first thing you are going to do before we log our reading?” Additionally, all students did not respond to the teacher’s questions which led to uneven levels of student engagement.
- In most classrooms, lesson plans and instruction; reflect multiple entry points and attempts to engage Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners. However, limited evidence of challenging task to engage higher-level learners were observed. The use of extensions to lesson and opportunities to stretch student thinking were inconsistently seen across classrooms.
- In most classrooms, teachers gave all students the same tasks which led to limited opportunities to support the needs of all learners. For example, in one classroom; students were told to annotate a text. When students were asked if they understand the task, several responded, “No.” This resulted in the teacher coming over to assist students.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has curricula aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and incorporates the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

Impact

The school's curricula choices strengthen college and career readiness and provides opportunities for all learners to develop their critical-thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The curriculum maps provided demonstrate the curriculum mapping process which takes place at the school. The real world experience and technology integration serves as a multiple entry point for Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners. Some forms of instructional technology include Achieve 3000. Screencasts also provide information in a digital format as well as serve as multiple entry points, and Google Forms is also used as a check-in for student assignments and groupings.
- Teachers collaborate for creation of lesson plans and curriculum maps to provide modifications for all learners based on student work and data. Furthermore, teachers utilize Google apps to create curriculum calendars with specific hyperlinks to access lessons and handouts so colleagues can review upcoming lesson plans and refine assignments to reach the learning style of all learners. The impact of this work has resulted in curriculum that is constantly being revised to meet the needs of all learners.
- Curricula and lesson plans include tasks which integrate instructional shifts such as solving multi-step problems using strategies such as Plan-Solve-Explain, in math. Teachers collaboratively engage in planning for close reading and have created a strategy that helps students respond to questions that require text based evidence. The strategy that is used is the Answer, Cite, Explain (ACE) which stimulates a deeper thinking process for students to use during the Socratic Seminars and when responding to Document Based Questions.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Throughout the school, teachers align assessments to curricula and use rubrics to provide students with constant and reliable feedback. Common assessments are used to trail student progress, to make adjustments to curricula, as well as academic tasks and instruction.

Impact

Teachers and students are provided a lucid picture of students' strengths and next steps for learning due to the use of assessment data and rubrics. The tracking of student progress across the school, allows staff to develop tasks and modify instruction in response to needs of all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a standards based grading policy which provides specific data on what students have mastered. By grading each standard separately, teachers analyze the effectiveness of their instructional practice and provide next steps for students which lead to mastery of particular standards.
- During vertical and horizontal teacher team meetings, data from student work such as exit tickets and end of unit assessments are reviewed using a Looking at Student Work Protocol which incorporates next steps during the discussion. Teachers also create student groupings and differentiate their lesson plans using this data.
- School-wide, teachers use assessments from selected curricula to determine student understanding and support them with detailed information on their skill strengths and areas of need. Students that need further support engage in revised tasks.
- Standards based feedback is provided to students on their work products which includes an area to celebrate (glows) and a next step for improvement (grows). During student interviews, it was shared that students are clear of what they do well and areas they need more help due to use of rubrics.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are constantly shared with the entire staff, students, and school community, and there is a system of accountability to ensure all stakeholders are meeting those expectations.

Impact

The school has various methods to communicate clear expectations for teachers and students. However, there are missed opportunities for partnering with parents to strengthen their knowledge of Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers have a Personalized Learning Plan which captures their goals for the school year. Administrators meet with teachers to discuss progress and next steps several times throughout the school year which hold teachers accountable for their development. Thus, there has been growth of teachers in areas such as demonstrating knowledge and content pedagogy.
- A Core Values rubric was created to reinforce school values (citizenship, respect, responsibility, relentless pursuit, and optimism). Students check-in with guidance counselors and teachers daily during advisory periods. Once a month, students rate themselves which makes them eligible or ineligible for the schools monthly core values celebration. As a result of integrating core values beyond academic expectations, there has been a decrease of school based incidents.
- During the advisory period which takes place weekly, students complete a Personalized Pathways Challenge online which informs them of their top ranked learning styles, strengths and blind spots, and career recommendations based on an intelligence profile. This results in differentiated options for students to reach goals created in collaboration with teachers and guidance counselors.
- During parent interviews it was stated that families receive ongoing communication about their child(s) progress, via emails, phone calls, and progress reports through an online system, Jump Rope. Parents can access their child(s) grades on classwork, homework, and assessments. Parents indicate that the principal and staff are always available to assist them. Furthermore, there is an awareness of Common Core Learning Standards; however parents are unsure of implications for student learning.