



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Nelson Mandela School for Social Justice

High School K765

**1700 Fulton Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11213**

Principal: Tabari Bomani

Date of review: March 23, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Janice Ross

The School Context

Nelson Mandela School for Social Justice is a high school with 124 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 86% Black, 11% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 60% of the students enrolled and girls account for 40%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 86.0%.

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	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	Celebration	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	Developing

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

**3.4 High
Expectations**

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations to students that are connected to a path of college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to help families understand their children's progress towards goals.

Impact

The school has systems and structures in place that support high expectations in academic progress and college and career readiness, and offers ongoing and detailed feedback guidance/advisement that prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal emails students once a week about upcoming events, academic celebrations, available academic supports, and after school opportunities, and in support of the Common Core Learning Standards (or Common Core), he also sends a challenge task to them aligned to the attainment framework.
- Parents felt supported by administration and teacher outreach efforts and spoke about student-led conferences, which ensured them that all were invested in their children's academic growth. Parents agreed that this supports their children in college and career readiness skills. The core curriculum for ninth graders introduces them to college and career projects around college and career exploration. The Rites of Passage program also has college and career units embedded in the curriculum.
- Student work is displayed at a tri-annual symposium, where all school constituents participate in support of high standards for writing.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher-centered lessons led to inconsistent engagement. For example, there were three teachers present in the math class, but one teacher dominated the lesson. The teacher stood at the board directing the flow of inquiry and this resulted in only teacher-to-student responses. Learning coaches are deployed to each and every classroom. They are utilized to support individualized learning, however, not all classrooms found consistent ways for them to co-teach. In the math class the learning coaches offered minimal support by circulating the room and assisting the students in their task of finding the solutions. Students were sitting in groups but not given a collaborative task.
- There was a lack of engagement in high-level thinking. For example, in a global history class, the teacher displayed a video “Slavery by Another Name.” Although the students were given questions, coded with Depth of Knowledge levels to accompany the film, students were not completing the questions during the viewing and this showed limited ownership of learning. Thus, teacher-centered lessons lead to inconsistent engagement.
- The science classroom incorporated collaborative learning with real-world application through the use of the Educurious program, an online learning program. Students were engaged in a differentiated lesson about developing a site for recreational tourism or residential living within an ecosystem of New York State whereby leveled (tiered) materials were used to support strategic grouping with specific roles based on the challenge presented and a defined group task. Students were given roles within the groups such as scientist, developer, and Environmental Protection Analyst (EPA) consultant, to support the real world application which resulted in the students collaborating and peer teaching.
- The English language arts class was student centered, in that students were completing self-paced work that utilized the work of previous lessons to craft an argumentative essay, requiring citation of evident from several sources. Scaffolds were in place to ensure attention to the process of writing. However, this high level of student accountability and thinking was not consistent across classrooms.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Impact

Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data so that a diversity of learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities, has access to the curricula and tasks and are cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents provided evidence that the school took the State curriculum and aligned it to the school’s EPIC Competency Framework. Each competency has attainments that are aligned to a task which is aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and also has the instructional shifts embedded. Lesson plans across subjects also indicate the attainments, aligned with the standards. For example there is alignment of standards to attainments in the ELA map, in the “revision and recovery time” unit, where students are asked to create an argumentative essay on a rigorous topic regarding the government’s role in restricting civil liberties. This was aligned to a study of Harrison Bergeron, and there were scaffolded activities in the lesson plan to assist students in structuring their essays, which demonstrates alignment of lessons to units.
- The curriculum attainment crosswalk is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, for example attainment # 1, “I can read and interpret technical text and literature,” is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards for ELA, math, science, and social studies.
- The science teacher use Edicurious, an online program, to guide the curriculum, which ensures a rigorous task with real world applications, and also provides access for diverse learners. This program promotes task creation that incorporates collaborative learning, where students take ownership of their work process and products.
- During the student meeting, students were able to articulate the use of the attainment rubrics, and the trajectory they are given towards a challenging, college ready culminating task.

Findings

The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies, that are aligned with the school's curricula, thus providing actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses the attainment rubric in class, as well as with displayed work, to ensure coherency of expectations and progress towards mastery of the attainments and Common Core Learning standards.
- In the online think through math program, students work at their own pace and teachers are able to assess student progress through the program. The teachers use the reports to inform instruction.
- Student paced themselves in their work in the ELA class by exploring the work they had done in previous lessons in order to inform their final drafts. They engaged in a self-assessment process to ensure they met the specifications of the required assignment.
- Units are created with a task in mind, to ensure a backwards planning approach for the summative assessment. Students are provided with the full arc for their learning to ensure that they are guided by the larger end-goals.
- Throughout the semester, learning coaches, teachers, and students, engage in one-on-one conferencing to assess and monitor student progress. This culminates in student-led conferences for parent-teacher conference days, between the learning coach, students, and parents. The students provide feedback on their own progress during these conferences, based on feedback they had been given by coaches and teachers. However, even though there was student work posted in the halls and some feedback evident on the work, there was minimal actionable feedback to direct students to a clear path towards mastery.

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

Distributed leadership structures are developing to support leadership capacity building and to include teachers in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on teams that may be loosely or ineffectively connected to school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, including the instructional shifts. The use of an inquiry approach is developing across the teams.

Supporting Evidence

- On Mondays, teachers meet for weekly professional learning sessions, where the principal and coaches create the professional development. The teachers engage in minimal collaboration in support of the school's goals. The school is developing a professional development plan that will support the school goal of embedding the attainments across the curricula.
- The meeting with the teachers evidenced that during Monday PD they engage in curriculum writing, adjusting tasks, and developing challenges to meet student needs. The teachers were able to articulate school goals regarding passing rates for Regents. Teachers have received targeted professional development on rigorous instruction, literacy strategies supported by the NYC Reading and Writing Project. However, because teachers teach an additional period to create smaller classrooms, they are utilizing their professional period for teaching instead of common planning, thus missing opportunities to analyze student work regularly. There was minimal evidence of inquiry.
- After reviewing Measures of Teacher Practice feedback, teachers are provided with resources and support to assist them with improving their pedagogy, however there are limited opportunities for follow-up on this targeted feedback through professional learning, therefore limiting the ability of the principal to build capacity.