



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Midtown West School

Elementary School M212

**328 West 48th Street
New York
NY 10036**

Principal: Ryan Bourke

Date of review: December 16, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson

The School Context

The Midtown West School is an elementary school with 360 students from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 7% Black, 22% Hispanic, 50% White, 8% Asian and 13% Multi-racial students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school...	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	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	Focus	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	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
To what extent does the school...	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		
To what extent does the school...	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school establishes high expectations for all constituent groups, including students, teachers, and families, through a variety of communication practices. The administration consistently messages important information to staff through the components of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and use of professional learning consultants.

Impact

Communication around high expectations has led to mutual accountability of student success by all stakeholders. These best practices have also resulted in high levels of professionalism, quality instruction, and effective communication around academic, social, and behavioral expectations for students resulting in improved student outcomes.

Supporting Evidence

- Each teacher at Midtown West sends out their own personalized newsletter on a weekly or monthly basis to parents which includes expectations for homework, Common Core Learning Standards related content materials, calendar of events, and the learning targets for each lesson, so that parents have the opportunity to support children in class or at home. For instance, as a common practice of the strong home and school connection, in one Kindergarten classroom, a parent was working with a group of students teaching them about the history of the island nation of Jamaica. Students were able to share what they learned as they were cutting out different shapes and cultures that are on the country's flag. They also shared the meaning of the different colors represented on the flag.
- The principal and the instructional core team created an ongoing yearlong professional development plan, which is revised periodically and incorporated into the school day to support reading, writing, and social studies. This includes work with Bank Street College staff, Teachers College, and Metamorphosis Teaching Learning Communities.
- The principal provides opportunities for ongoing and frequent inter-visitations, which are coordinated and organized by teachers. For example, teachers are conducting a book study using Notice and Note, a recording tool and have spent time in each other's classrooms observing and offering feedback based on components of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- The school hosts parent workshops, such as writing Lab, math mornings on Thursday, Tuesday family read-alouds, and math club for 4th and 5th grade parents in preparation for the New York State assessments. The workshops are organized to support parent's understanding of the Common Core Standards requirements for all grades. Additionally, the principal provides a monthly report to parents, which outlines current curricular initiatives, as well as progress on the instructional focus. Parents are also invited to participate in a monthly session of "You talk, I listen", where parents come in and share their concerns, beliefs, and suggestions for fifteen minutes on how to support their children's learning. During these sessions, school staff listens, take notes and then follow-up and implement suggestions made by parents.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Pedagogy is consistent in providing instructional supports, questioning scaffolds and entry points for a variety of learners. However, some teachers are still working through alignment of pedagogy to the rigor of the curriculum.

Impact

Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. However, teaching practices are not yet purposefully implemented to allow students to take full ownership of their learning, impacting the level of their work products and some students' progress towards mastery of the standards.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classrooms visited students engaged in discussions, in pairs or small groups, where they were able to make connections, summarize ideas across content and justify their thinking and answer choices. In a writing class, students were asked to improve their writing using a rubric after discussing the work with their partners and table mates. Students generated their own questions to ask their partners to help them improve their writing piece. However, this practice of student ownership was not evidence across the vast majority of classes visited. Across classrooms, there was clear evidence of planning of teaching points that are aligned to curricula, such as asking students to investigate character traits, make connections between texts, or solve math word problems. However, in some classrooms, lessons, teaching strategies and planned activities did not yield student work products for a variety of learners reflective of the expectations and rigor of the curricula.
- All classrooms demonstrated evidence of structured opportunities for students to engage in tasks on their own or with their peers that required use of academic vocabulary, genre specific evidenced based writing and demonstrating deep understanding and application of concepts in their work. For example, students in one class were asked to read deeper and longer with other parts to make connections between the text and self, however not all classes required students to engage in these types of activities.
- Most classrooms demonstrated evidence of opportunities for students to engage in think, pair, share activities, working in small work on tasks that required them to work in pairs or groups using academic vocabulary and accountable talk stems. Students had to discuss the strategies used for solving a math measurement problem demonstrating a deep conceptual understanding of the problem and the task. For example, students in a reading class discussed the different books they were reading and made connections to each other's books based on specific task cards. Students challenged each other's thinking by asking their group mate to provide evidence to support their answers and reasoning. However, in a few other classes there were limited opportunities outside of the planned activities that allowed students to lead and further explore and apply concepts learned in different situations.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards with the strategic integration of the instructional shifts. Across all grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are coherently embedded and emphasized in all curricula and academic tasks.

Impact

As a result of the school's integrated units and curriculum maps, there is coherence across all grades, with academic tasks that push students' thinking and promotes college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- All curricula are planned using grade band loops for math and English Language Arts with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) activities incorporated, as well as Social Studies. Teachers across the school work collaboratively to plan units of study and incorporate resources, such as field trips, technology activities and hands-on tools to support learners along the continuum of expectations for the grade level, as well as to connect students' learning to experience.
- Technology Engineering and Mathematics research-based (TERC) investigations are used for math problem-solving, as well as the school-wide focus on number string routines, that emphasize the eight Common Core Learning Standards of math practice throughout all grades. Students participate in a researched-based whole class discussion activity, entitled Math Congress where students are able to discover, discuss, and reflect about their solutions, while sharing ideas and identifying concepts to be used to solve math word problems.
- Curricula and academic tasks require students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) to think accurately and with clarity, take and support opinions and positions, and demonstrate their thinking in new learning situations. For example, there are highlighted purposeful and frontloading of vocabulary for students who need it, in order to help support them while writing and understanding reading and math concepts.
- There is a clear balance of fiction and non-fiction text and opportunities for immersion in each genre at grade level and beyond, through increased use of complex text aligned to authentic real world tasks within teacher-created units of study. These units include appropriate scaffolds for language and visual supports across all content areas and across grades.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The school consistently uses and adjusts curricula aligned assessment practices, grading policies and pedagogical strategies that focus on checks for understanding to create a clear portrait for students and staff regarding student progress .

Impact

Data-driven decisions are made school-wide leading to rigorous curricula adjustments at the teacher and classroom levels, and student self-assessment tools guide instructional decisions and provide clear and actionable learning targets for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers' monitored progress of students within each unit of study through frequent strategies such as checklists, questioning prompts, exit slips, and in class conferring, in order to effectively group students based on levels and performance. Students are aware of their groups and what it takes to be done in order to move between flexible groups based on their work performance. The school wide writing rubric which is used across grades and a variety of genres is appropriate based on the grade level and performance of students. There are also standards-aligned rubrics used in all content areas, as well as student facing checklists that ask students to go through a series of steps and answer questions to improve their work and monitor their progress towards mastery of content standards.
- The school uses a variety of feedback protocols, such as looking at student work so that students have the opportunity to self and peer assess and teachers utilize this information to support students in achieving their learning targets or goals. Students also are given the opportunity to have input in their portfolios selections, goals, and action plans. In addition, teachers loop with their classes and are afforded additional qualitative data points to help them make curricula and instructional adjustments, as needed.
- Teachers collaboratively write students' mid-year reflections that include a description of each student's learning style and progress towards learning goals. It also offers a rich opportunity for teachers to discuss aspects of the curriculum in which the student is immersed. For example, periodically, fourth and fifth grade students participate in student led parent teacher conferences and are aware of the criteria needed for them to make improvements to their work. Students are aware of their next learning steps and are able to organize rubrics and checklists along with samples of their work as evidence of them achieving or making progress towards achieving learning goals and targets.
- On a weekly basis, the principal and teacher teams meet to plan rigorous tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards that support questioning and discussion and next steps for learners. Every week, teachers across subject areas and grades apply information from class lessons to determine student growth and adjust groups and instruction accordingly.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based structured professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership across the school.

Impact

Structured professional collaborations have resulted in school-wide instructional coherence, increased student achievement, and opportunities for teachers to make critical decisions that impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers collaborate on a daily or weekly basis in professional teams where they develop and implement school-wide instructional practices, such as embedding the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts to continuously promote improved achievement for all learners by focusing on grade level differences through a continuum of what students should know and be able to do at the end of a lesson, unit, and semester.
- Teacher teams representing all grades and subject areas, as well as related services personnel, meet on a regular basis and clearly articulate how they implement structured collaborations to inform their work. Teachers shared that they are given the authority to make changes to programs, schedules, or instructional methodologies based on teacher work. For example, as a result of their work, various teachers, including coaches and cluster teachers pull small groups of students to provide enrichment and project-based activities, while the other half of the class remains for strategic small group instruction with the classroom teacher. Teachers shared that they have noticed that student reading levels, writing samples, and the quality of their discussions have improved.
- Teacher teams work collaboratively to adapt Teachers College units to address students' strengths and areas of need, with revisions and adjustments as needed. For example, during an observed meeting teachers were involved in inquiry around collegial interactions to improve student engagement, as measured by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers analyzed the types of questions which were being asked, who asked the questions (students vs. teachers), and offered next steps to improve practice and student outcomes in lessons. Teachers also collected evidence to measure and monitor the impact of classroom practice to improve student engagement. This work then informs the adjustments made to future unit maps.
- There is a school-wide looping model based on teacher feedback, where teachers develop a deeper connection and understanding of their students and learning styles by keeping them for two years and students know their strengths, weaknesses, and area for strategic concentration. Less time is spent in the beginning of the year getting to know students. Teachers also develop a firm understanding of two different grade level content and expectations in order to support what was needed for the previous grade and the upcoming grade.