Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

M.S. M247 Dual Language Middle School

Middle School M247

32 West 92 Street
Manhattan
NY 10025

Principal: Caitlin Caldwell

Dates of review: May 11, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Ilene Altschul

The School Context

M.S. M247 Dual Language Middle School is a middle school with 197 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 99% Hispanic, 0% White, and 0% Asian students. The student body includes 26% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 95.6%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

To what extent does the school regularly...	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	**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.	**Additional Findings**	**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:	**1.1 Curriculum**	**Rating:**	**Well Developed**

Findings

School leader and staff ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts coherently across content areas. The curricula units embed rigorous tasks and habits of mind.

Impact

All curricula coherently promotes college and career readiness and all students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD), are challenged to think critically and demonstrate their understanding.

Supporting Evidence

- Across all content areas, emphasis is placed on increasing communication skills through reading, writing, speaking and listening. In grade 8 English language arts (ELA) class, students are reading Omnivore's Dilemma. During this class, the students were charting the pros and cons of local sustainable, industrial, or industrial organic. The students were utilizing the reading of the informational text to participate in a debate on the costs and benefits of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in science. In social studies, students are studying the impact in advertising.

- Another shift is the emphasis on integrating content to ensure that it is relevant in their lives and the world. For example, in grade 7 science students are engaged in a unit on rocks and minerals. Based on their learning, students were investigating and researching the cause of the earthquake in Nepal. Students read an article from *USA Today* titled, "Nepal quake occurred at major plate boundary". Students were given a graphic organizer to collect evidence using a variety of sources from the internet and provide an explanation of connection between evidence and their study of earth, rocks and minerals.

- Habits of mind are embedded into all units such as students posing questions, meta-cognition, and persistence to complete a task, applying knowledge and becoming independent learners. For example, in grade 7 English language arts, students were analyzing the standards to develop a rubric for discussion. Students were engaged in a discussion on the expectations of a successful discussion about a text.

- A review of unit plans indicates strategic and intentional planning with rigorous tasks. Unit plans include essential questions, enduring understanding, the alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards, and the assessment(s) and rubric for the performance task. In addition, teachers plan for possible student misconceptions. By doing so, teachers can be prepared with effective ways to respond with additional guiding questions, examples, or visuals to support student understanding. For example, in the mathematics lesson, the teacher anticipated the students' difficulty with identifying the diagonal of the base to solve for the diagonal of the prism. The teacher was able to utilize a student's misconception to further the students' understanding.

- Teachers are strategically planning to ensure that all students including ELLs and SWDs are challenged and able to successfully demonstrate their thinking. Across all grades and content areas, teachers provide supports to students through the development of a content-specific glossary, strategic grouping, and use of technology, sentence starters, graphic organizers and leveled texts. Unit and lesson plans indicate the use of tiered questions, use of videos, guided practice and collaborative group work or partner work to support all learners.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies vary in providing all learners with strategic supports into the curricula. Student work products reflect high levels of student thinking and participation with inconsistent opportunities for student ownership.

Impact

The inclusion of strategic high-quality supports and extensions vary across all classrooms reducing the rate of progress for targeted students and all students demonstrating meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- During a math lesson in an Integrated Co-Teaching class (ICT), students were solving high-level problems applying the Pythagorean Theorem to determine unknown side lengths in real-world mathematical problems in three dimensional shapes. Students were either working independently or with a partner. Both teachers were circulating and supporting the students in small groups to ensure mastery. Visuals were provided for the students to understand, but many students struggled with the concept.

- In all classrooms visited, all students were engaged in group discussion, partner work, or independent work. The students were studying the Roman expansion and worked in groups to read and discuss in Spanish whether or not the end justified the means. There were consistent opportunities for student discussion and participation. In social studies, the delivery of instruction is in Spanish. Students struggling with the language received peer support; however, some students struggled and were not as proficient with the language limiting their understanding.

- In two different English language arts classes, students were reading high-level texts. The grade 8 students were reading Omnivore's Dilemma and were working in groups finding pros and cons for the assigned food chain. As an additional support, the special education teacher worked with the students in citing evidence. The grade 6 class was reading Dragonwings. Students received supports from peers, photographs and video to ensure the understanding of the time period. However, not all students had opportunities to take ownership of their learning or challenged in completing the task.

- Students indicate that they are reading and analyzing text and writing across all subject areas. A review of student work indicates that students are challenged to think and support their claim through citing specific evidence. In grade 8, students read To Kill a Mockingbird and students were to write why it made sense for Atticus to take Tom Robinson's case and take a stand. In social studies class, students wrote an essay on how effective the progressive reformers were in changing American society. Students were expected to include an opposing claim in their essay, but some students struggled with mastering the higher-order skill.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use rubrics and assessments to track student progress and inform their instructional next steps. Teachers' assessment practices consistently offer a clear portrait of mastery.

Impact

Students receive meaningful feedback and targeted instruction so that all students demonstrate progress and increased achievement levels.

Supporting Evidence

- School uses common assessments across grade and content areas. Teachers use diagnostic assessment data to identify content standards that require intensive focus throughout all units of study. Teachers track student mastery of content and skills across each semester and identify the targeted strategies to support student achievement. Teachers provide additional instruction and support and then students have an opportunity to retake the assessment to reach mastery. As a result of strategic tracking and adjustments, the school is exceeding the target in student progress and closing the achievement gap.

- A review of student work across the vast majority of classrooms and in discussion with the students clearly indicates that rubrics are used consistently for teachers to provide targeted feedback for next steps for students as well as for students to self-assess. Students receive ongoing feedback from their teachers and they review their progress with their advisor on a monthly basis. Students state that they receive meaningful feedback that helps them develop as a learner. For example, a student was given the recommendation to strengthen the conclusion and another student was to consider the audience and provide more information with specific evidence. Another student agreed that she has improved in English language arts this year based on feedback on strengthening the analysis and including quotes in her essays. Students were able to apply these recommendations to either the current essay or future tasks and show progress in their achievement levels.

- Teachers stated that they review student work and data to identify adjustments. Teachers regularly reflect on their lessons and would make notes so that they can adjust their instructional strategies. One teacher indicated that last year, as a result of reviewing the students' end of unit writing task, she needed to increase the students' use of evidence in the essay and as a result, refined the unit. In math, there were adjustments to the units to incorporate more opportunities for discussion. In addition, based on students' difficulty with particular concepts, the teachers revise the sequence of the lessons to ensure mastery of the concepts, such as moving fractions to the beginning of the year so that they can master that unit prior to learning about ratio.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings

School leader and staff establish a culture for learning through professional learning opportunities and observations that convey high expectations. The school effectively partners with families with consistent updates and feedback towards understanding student progress.

Impact

The entire staff takes ownership of their professional growth and there is a culture of mutual accountability. In addition, families and staff successfully support students to meet the high expectations and are prepared for the next level on a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates expectations through individual meetings, grade level team meetings and observational feedback. Weekly meetings between the principal and each teacher are held to discuss individualized areas of need and celebration, including instructional planning and delivery, classroom management, classroom culture, and relationships with students' families. Teachers indicate that these meetings provide them an opportunity to be reflective and discuss what resources or supports they may need to be more successful.

- Professional development includes weekly Monday sessions, peer inter-visitations and observations, and professional learning communities (PLCs) once a month. The topics for the PLCs are teacher-driven and include supporting native language learners, best practices in co-planning and co-teaching, and use of questioning and discussion. Teachers state that the varied structures for professional development have been effective as it is differentiated and aligned to their targeted areas of growth. Teachers hold each other accountable through the peer observations. Teachers state that they are constantly learning from each other and the peer observations are a more formalized structure to provide feedback in a supportive manner rather than evaluative.

- The school provides ongoing and consistent communication with the families. Parents praise the school on the high level of communication. Advisors act as a constant point of contact with parents. Parents and advisors communicate through phone calls, emails, and written notices regarding students' social-emotional and academic progress in all content areas. Advisors provide weekly progress reports to students and parents so they are aware of progress, missing work or behavioral concerns.

- All students engage in student-led conferences twice per year. During these conferences, students present their academic progress to their parent or guardian, as well as justification and reasoning for their grades during the trimester. Students are able to clearly articulate their goals and take responsibility towards meeting them. Students also maintain a REACH (Respect, Enthusiasm, Achievement, Citizenship, and Hard Work) log where they self-evaluate their ability towards "reaching" their personal best. These personal behaviors as well as the academic coursework prepare students on a path to college and career readiness and engage parents in the process.

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured vertical and horizontal teacher teams as well as professional learning communities. These collaborations strategically and effectively enable teachers to systematically analyze instructional practices, student work and data.

Impact

As a result of collaborative teams, teachers' classroom practices are strengthened and there is school-wide instructional coherence. Teachers make adjustments to their practices to ensure mastery and increase student outcomes for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers meet in professional collaborations. Department teams meet twice a week to review unit plans, lesson plans, and learning tasks. Teachers engage in collaborative task and assessment analysis to ensure alignment with units of study and the Common Core Learning Standards. They review student data to adjust groupings to address student needs and extend student learning. In addition, teachers discuss the evidence and next steps from the peer observation cycles to inform teacher practice and growth. Grade level teams meet once a week to discuss students and create action steps to ensure student progress. Professional Learning communities meet once a month. For each session, teachers develop their inquiry question, agenda and next steps.

- During the English language arts (ELA) department team meeting, teachers were reviewing their unit plan and discussing additional modifications that can be added to support all learners. Teachers were sharing best practices, such as the use of the glossary, chunking the text, and providing materials on varied levels to engage all students. Teachers stated that the department teams have been beneficial to improvement in their practices through collaborative planning and building coherent practices to support struggling learners and/or English language learners.

- Through the department team meetings, teachers review the student data and create a "groupings by mastery level" worksheet to support or enhance all students' learning. Teachers then identify targeted strategies to ensure proficiency and develop re-mastery tasks. The special education department reviews the assessments, and for individual students charts the level of percentage mastery for each tested standard. The special education teachers then develop an individualized action plan to push the student toward independent success of standards and the strategies and resources that will be provided to re-teach the priority standards.

- The social studies department works collaboratively to develop text-dependent questions, performance tasks, units integrating current events and providing opportunities for debate across grade levels and units. Through analysis of lesson and unit plans and through formal and informal peer observations, teachers provide feedback to each other to ensure professional growth and student understanding.