



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

I.S. 289 Hudson River Middle School

**Middle School M289
201 Warren Street
Manhattan, NY
10282**

Principal: Zeynep Ozkan

Date of review: May 11, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Hadiya J. Daniel-Wilkins

The School Context

I.S 289 Hudson River is a middle school with 292 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 10% Black, 15% Hispanic, 39% White, and 35% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 17% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.0%.

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	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	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	Focus	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	Well Developed
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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams effectively analyze key elements of classroom practices, student work and data that inform instruction, and distributive leadership structures are embedded so that teachers play a vital role in school level decision-making.

Impact

Professional collaborations have resulted in the establishment of a teacher-lead system for improving student learning and teachers' professional practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams systematically developed a system for reviewing the academic and social development for groups of students they share, in order to make informed professional decisions on improving student performance. For example, one team of teachers meets to discuss, "Evaluating Student Accountability Expectations and Structures," on a weekly basis. This group looks at students' work products, discusses and records the following for each student: "What are some common expectations? What are some common supports and strategies for said student? This teacher team then reflects on teaching practice by asking each other and logging the following: "What expectations can be added to the grade you teach to make for an easier transition in the next grade? And, "Are there support/strategies in another grade that would be a good addition to your grade? This practice routinely happens for students across all grades.
- The staff consistently meets to discuss a core value goal of increasing student independence as learners. This group has instituted a structure for developing youngsters as empowered learners. The teachers in this collaborative team meet weekly to design progression indicators, for students' independence, aligned to the learning progression outcomes of the Common Core Learning Standards. This team has determined some of the following on a, "Progression of Student Independence" chart: "An independent 6th grader should be able to plan and manage time within a class period; An independent 7th grader should be able to share ideas with partner; An independent 8th grader should be able to innovate and share with confidence." Teachers input in decisions that affect student achievement are rooted in the structure of professional collaborations.
- Administrators and teachers can articulate how the school's core competency values of, "Work Habits: Plan and Prepare and Collaborate," has served as a conduit for teachers' contribution to critical instructional decisions that impact students' scholarship across grades. A teacher team was observed planning and preparing a "Social Action Project" for students of eighth grade. Noting the school's competencies of, "Investigate, Interpret, Argue, Communicate and Discern," teachers, across disciplines, were witnessed planning for students' learning by discussing pertinent content necessary for youngsters to produce a project that would challenge them to produce real-world products.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments rubrics and practices consistently reflect the use on ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Feedback to students is provided, and students are provided with occasions to conduct self-reflections.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administrators can articulate reasons for assessment choices. These choices deliver a range of data to support the collaborative inquiry process for improving instruction. The school assess whether students are, “Exceeding Standards, Meeting Standards, Approaching Standards, Areas of Concern, “using exit tickets, individual and small group conferences, teacher-designed tests, and portfolios assessments. Task rubrics are used to provide students feedback. Actionable and meaningful feedback, pertaining to student performance across all grades, is expanding.
- Across classrooms, teachers’ consistently respond to the quality of students’ work products by affixing rubrics. Students’ performance outcomes are often highlighted on rubrics. Opportunities however, to routinely provide students with next learning steps expectations, are inconsistent across grades. For example, students in sixth grade are receiving check marks and circles on rubric performance levels, while students in eight grade are receiving highlighted rubrics with some additional comments on next learning needs.
- Students are provided with opportunities to self-assess, as one method for teachers to calculate understandings. In discussion with students however, some accounts on self-assessing were relegated to a repeating of what the teacher circled on the rubric. Opportunities for students, across grades, to comprehend the “big idea’ learning behind the tasks are evolving.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff ensure that curricula are aligned to CCLS, content standards and the school's core competencies, and purposefully integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks to afford all students moments to show thinking.

Impact

Teachers are utilizing their core competencies and Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula and academic tasks to cognitively engage a variety of learners in college and career readiness tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- Across content areas, unit plans have been deliberately prepared to intentionally align the school's core competencies of, "Investigate, Interpret, Argue, Communicate, Discern, Plan & Prepare, Collaborate, Innovate and Reflect," with the performance expectation of all Common Core Learning Standards. For example, unit plans, using the Understanding by Design format, had the competencies of, "plan and prepare, discern, argue and interpret aligned to CCLS RL6. 3, 4, 6. In one unit task, 6th grade students were required to partner with a peer to complete was the following: "Create a presentation of a 'dream team' for a boss in order to show your understanding of character traits. Make a clear claim about the character; Support the idea with relevant evidence from across the text, Analyze the evidence to explain how it supports the idea; Assemble a Dream Team to travel on the Amazing Race."
- Curricula and tasks, across grades and subjects, challenge all students, including student with special disabilities and English language learners to think critically. Scaffolds are also planned in lessons to ensure students can demonstrate their thinking. Across classrooms, "standards-based classroom lesson plans," includes, "accommodations/differentiation for grouping, materials and products." In one eighth grade class, students, with different learning needs, were observed engaged in partner discussions in a fishbowl activity planned to challenge students to determine, "What are consequences for dividing people by race and gender?"
- School leaders and teachers provide a data-based rationale that identifies area of growth and achievement gaps for students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, and explained how curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work to grant access to cognitively engaging content for all students. Daily student conferencing is an integral component of teachers' instructional repertoire for helping to determine the academic needs of all students. Teachers, across classrooms, meet with students during lessons to ascertain students' understandings or misconceptions. One teacher's notes revealed that in math, one student with special needs required, "Prompts to write equation from expression." The teacher also added yet another student with special needs demonstrated misunderstandings because, "He was trying to do mental math." On-going student conferencing provided timely supports for all learners.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Learning activities are derived from standards-based curricula reflective of the leadership's espoused beliefs about how students' thinking and participation can be challenged.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers' instructional practices reflected a school-wide belief that when students are engaged in rigorous, collaborative, and interesting inquiry-based learning, they would have opportunities to access content and develop skills. In classrooms visited, teachers had students engaged in accessing content through "Essential Questions" for learning, coupled with the school's competencies. In one class students were observed planning and preparing to embark on a Media Literacy Social Action Project, prompted by the essential question of, "How can we use our reading and writing to identify injustice and social problems?" Students were expected to demonstrate the school's competency of, "Discerning, when completing the task. Discussions, at the team and school levels, on how to continue to engage students in activities that will allow them to discern information, are a goal.
- Students, across classrooms produced work and engaged in discussions that revealed thinking, and problem solving. For instance, in one classroom, students, who partnered, were heard discussing an activity. One student posed the following question to the other: "Do you think you referred to evidence from the text?" The partner responded with, "I don't know if I really did." The exchange pertaining to the activity continued. While students were evidently thinking and participating, opportunities to demonstrate ownership of the learning, by being able to share the conceptual understanding goals of the task is a work-in-progress.
- Across the school, lessons are designed to provide ample student-to-student collaborative learning experiences, reflecting high levels of participation. Moments to allow students increased voice in the rationale of determining group members are evolving.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and faculty consistently communicate high expectations to entire staff. Teachers have established a culture for learning that methodically communicates a unified set of high expectations for all students.

Impact

The school has an entrenched academic support system that provides all learners and families' opportunities to plan and prepare for achievement at the next levels.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders create elevated levels of expectations for all staff, which is evident throughout the learning community in verbal and written structure of the school's "competencies." Modeling the school's competencies of, collaborating and reflecting," teachers were heard discussing the feedback received on the progress they were making in the focused area of Danielson's Framework for Teaching Domain 3. They acknowledged that the expectations were for professional performances to exceed standards in the areas of, "Having students justify answers, and increasing the quality of vocabulary." They held each other mutually accountable for meeting those professional standards through inter-visits and on-going collaborations.
- The school creates prominent expectations for all staff that fosters a culture of mutual accountability between all stakeholders. Parents expressed their appreciation for staff providing an environment in which their children were engaged in the following: Project-based learning collaborative experiences; provided with opportunities to demonstrate, 'Habits of learning and mind;' afforded moments to develop note-taking skills and synthesizing information; and where their children with special needs were receiving all services, without being concerned of being stigmatized. Parents added that since the school routinely communicated their children's progress, the relationship with staff was one of mutual respect.
- Teachers and guidance have a set of clear systematic structures for articulating high expectations and sharing information with students that supports preparation for the next educational levels. All students are assigned to scheduled conference time with academic coaches to help with goal setting and developing and monitoring plans for their next educational steps. Students reported that their education experiences, at I.S. 289, helps them develop, "Excellent work ethics, because they are required to create work plans; teaches them to collaborate for the work world; and forces them to hold each other accountable, because everyone has a stake in everyday group work." Consistently communicating high expectations for academic and social performance in a fixed part of the school's culture.