



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Muscota New School

06M314

**4862 Broadway
Manhattan
NY 10034**

Principal: Camille Wallin

**Date of review: January 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Claudette Essor**

The School Context

Muscota New School is an elementary school with 259 students from grade K through grade 5. The school population includes 5% Black, 49% Hispanic, 37% White and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95%.

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	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	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Administrators systematically convey high expectations to staff, students and families, with many support structures for them to succeed in meeting the expectations.

Impact

The school's stakeholders share collective responsibility for high quality teaching and learning that result in student progress towards college and career readiness goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Tools such as the Principal's *Daily Bulletin*, newsletters and data collection sheets are distributed to all staff, specifying high expectations for teaching and learning. For example, the Principal's *Daily Bulletin* states instructional expectations linked to walk-throughs and intervisitations, with specific focus on targeted components of the Danielson Framework, instructional next steps and timelines for implementation. Teachers also noted that administrators use conferences, reviews of unit and lesson plans, feedback from observations, and analyses of student work and data to hold all staff accountable for meeting instructional expectations.
- Minutes of cohort meetings illustrate the school's high expectations for professional learning via cycles of inquiry, including peer to peer intervisitations, in keeping with the school's participation in professional development offerings by the Danielson group. The principal noted that through these activities, teachers are trained to "focus on a specific lens and provide feedback to their colleagues, using intervisitation protocols", with a high level of accountability for teachers to implement new strategies learned. Teachers at the team meetings stated that cohort teams include teachers of the current and next grade level for each child so professional learning sessions require "everyone to come together to support all students in meeting grade requirements and expectations for the next grade".
- All parents interviewed stated that this is a school where communication of high expectations is an "every day thing". Expectations are outlined via letters sent home by teachers, weekly newsletters from the principal and open invitations for families to view lessons as well as serve as volunteers in classrooms. Parents also stated that, driven by their efforts, the school has a strong after school program run by parents, a science and arts program and a class parent program, with many parent volunteers accompanying students on field trips and working with teachers in classrooms, during the school day and after school. They also noted that through parent teacher conferences and workshops, they engage in hands on activities and get suggestions to support their children at home.
- A parent stated that "'Coffee with Camille'" allows them to meet directly with the principal to receive feedback about their children's learning and provide input in school improvement initiatives. Several parents spoke proudly of their children's achievements, with one using a project board and index card to list many outstanding achievements which have resulted in his child making presentations all over the borough and city because she is "already doing middle school and college level work right here". Another parent added that test scores in English language arts and math show students' increasing success in meeting the school's high expectations for learning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

All lessons viewed showed some focus on strategies for differentiation of learning. However instruction did not consistently incorporate rigorous tasks nor engage all students in discussions that pushed them to think deeply about concepts presented across disciplines.

Impact

Teaching practices do not consistently immerse all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, in productive struggles with challenging tasks that maximize their opportunities to demonstrate higher order thinking and high levels of participation in learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classrooms, teachers assigned tasks that evoked discussions, as students quoted evidence from texts to support claims or validate responses to questions. For example, in a first grade guided reading classroom, groups of students read their group's text aloud and cited textual evidence as they engaged in re-telling parts of the story. However, in other classrooms, there was very little shared discussion, including in a third grade classroom where students sat in groups but most worked on their own, with little or no attention from the teacher. One child in a group with laptops and headphones stated that she was reading an online article to "write wonderings".
- Teachers in some classrooms engaged students in challenging tasks, such as reading texts to cite evidence for responses to tasks and using academic vocabulary to explain solution to problems. For example, in a fourth grade math class, students were allowed to work with a partner on problem solving in math, (strategies for adding and subtracting parts of a whole) and then present and explain the solution to the class, using academic vocabulary and accountable talk stems in sharing rationales for solutions. Similarly, second grade students were allowed to engage in a productive struggle to show how to "use objects and drawings to solve addition problems". Several used accountable talk stems to explain their thinking.
- In some classrooms visited, all students worked on the same task with differentiated levels of support but most teachers did not provide activities for the more advanced learners. For example, in a fifth grade Integrated Co-teaching Team classroom students sat in groups at tables, using a "Say Something" protocol to read through an article. Some struggled through the reading while others read their part and became disengaged. Similarly, a group of kindergarten students sat at tables looking at a mealworm to, according to one student, "talk about, draw and label the worm". Some of them did just that but then became inattentive because they were finished and were not asked to do anything else by the teacher, who was working with students at another table.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administrators ensure that Common Core-aligned curricula integrate the instructional shifts and address college and career readiness skills. Student work and data are used to plan curricula and academic tasks, providing opportunities for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, to be highly engaged in learning.

Impact

The school's engagement in ongoing review and modification of interdisciplinary curricula results in all learners having access to units of study with academic tasks that are designed to accelerate learning by all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Minutes of meetings show that all teacher teams conducted data analysis of student baseline assessments and reviewed student work samples to determine adjustments needed to alignment curricula to Common Core Learning Standards. For example, teachers used a backwards design approach to create new unit maps by revising unit maps from the previous year, with a focus on improving students' proficiency in writing; new units viewed showed more in-depth informational, narrative, and opinion based writing tasks.
- Throughout the grades the interdisciplinary curricula is developed through six literacy based theme-based units, with some units emphasizing science content and skills and others showing emphasis on social studies skills and topics. According to the principal, the school has aligned science curricula to Next Generation Science Standards, "shifting science curriculum emphasis towards STEM-related projects and experiments". In addition, the science curriculum is extended by a nutrition course that uses locally grown, organic food to make healthy recipes. Further, the school's own community garden serves as an outdoor science lab through which students can explore the life cycle of plants and harvest vegetables for use in the cafeteria. Instruction in math is linked to *Go Math*, with modifications by teacher teams creating access points for learners with diverse needs.
- There is also a "Responsive Classroom" curriculum, with topics to be covered and activities to be implemented across the school, for students to build college and career readiness skills such as persistence, independence, and inquiry. Further, all students receive instruction in drama, visual arts, dance and music. In addition, the principal implemented *Foundations*, a phonics-based program to accelerate literacy skills development at the early grades.
- Unit plans show the school's focus on the instructional shifts, with tasks requiring students to engage in learning activities such as making inferences from texts, citing evidence for texts to support explanations, solving complex problems in math and engaging in projects that involve explorations of real world problems and community service. Unit maps and lesson plans viewed also contain essential questions, anchor texts, rubrics, standards, vocabulary, scaffolds for subgroups, culminating projects, trips and forms of ongoing assessment, including suggested checks for understanding for all students.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

A range of assessments linked to interdisciplinary units of curricula provide data on student performance, informing staff and students about students' progress towards learning goals and identifying learning needs to be addressed.

Impact

Feedback contributes to an ongoing assessment of students' progress towards learning goals so that all students' needs can be accurately depicted and addressed by all staff.

Supporting Evidence

- An assessment calendar shows that the school administers a variety of formal and informal assessments, including Measures of Student Learning baseline assessments, Developmental Reading assessments, embedded unit assessments and end of chapter assessments, all measuring student's proficiency and content knowledge related to varied performance tasks across content areas.
- Administrators share with all staff assessment data that they use to identify gaps in student learning, help create groups for differentiated instruction and inform revisions to instructional plans. For example, the principal noted that the school guided teachers in implementing a phonics program and explicit vocabulary instruction, based upon students' needs detected via assessments.
- Teachers use task-specific rubrics, checklists, and "Can Cards" aligned to curricula, to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines, to students and other staff. For example, student folders examined showed listings of content specific "I can" statements which students checked off in self-assessing their performance on the applicable tasks.
- A variety of rubrics were seen on bulletin boards in classrooms and hallways and all students interviewed were able to articulate how they use rubrics in their classes. Further, student work showed rubric based comments attached to the work, providing feedback, including next steps to improve the work.
- Classroom practices showed use of varied methods of ongoing checks for understanding which are explicitly stated on unit maps. In addition protocols such as "Analyzing Go Math Assessments" and "The Making Meaning Protocol" detail steps for exploring students' understanding during and after instruction and recommends specific examples of real time adjustments based on students' needs.

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

All teachers are a part of structured professional collaborations that require them to share content knowledge and instructional strategies focused on the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Distributed management structures support the development of teacher leadership, and teachers have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact

Cohort team meetings empower all teachers to assume responsibility for improving teacher practice and student mastery of applicable performance standards, with members collaborating in analyzing student work and data, to plan instruction that improves achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff members are programmed for 90 minutes of common planning time in cohort meetings where they engage in collaborative inquiry activities. Teams spanning grade bands (grades K-1, grades 2-3 and grades 4-5) meet weekly, focusing on improving student learning through improved instruction grounded in Common Core aligned curricula.
- With guidance from administrators as well as a literacy coach, teacher leaders and a math consultant, teacher teams engage in ongoing refinement of interdisciplinary units of study. Team members stated that they also take turns presenting “problems of practice” which are used to promote reflections on teaching practices and strategies. They collaboratively identify and address trends in data and chart next steps for improving student mastery of Common Core aligned goals and expectations. For example, a review of unit maps for this year and last year shows revisions of performance tasks and activities within the units of study, including the addition of more writing tasks and modifications of activities, scaffolds and assessments in *Go Math* to create differentiated problem sets for students at all grade levels to practice problem solving.
- Minutes of teams meetings show the use of a variety of protocols that allow all voices to be heard, as participants share best practices, challenges and instructional moves that they recommend or have implemented based on peer feedback from intervisitations. For example, a teacher led “cycle of inquiry” requires all team members to follow up on suggestions given by peers at meetings, report on their follow up work and engage in intervisitations to share and learn best practices. Teachers stated that they also contribute to decisions that impact learning such as selecting books for their study groups, choosing their own group for professional development and determining topics for their inquiry work.
- Several staff members participate in the Department of Education’s Teacher Leadership Program and the Danielson’s Group’s training for distributive leadership. They meet regularly with administrators and teachers, planning professional development activities and turn keying information to their peers. Other staff members hold leadership roles as members of teams such as the Child Study Team, Academic Intervention Services team and the principal’s Cabinet. According to the principal, this has strengthened teacher practice, as evidenced by data showing students’ progress towards learning goals.