



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

University Neighborhood

Middle School M332

**220 Henry Street
Manhattan
NY 10002**

Principal: Laura Peynado Castro

**Date of review: March 16, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Kristine Mustillo**

The School Context

University Neighborhood Middle School is a middle school with 100 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 17% Black, 76% Hispanic, 2% White, and 5% Asian students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 28% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.0%.

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	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	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

School leaders consistently convey high expectations for teachers through the Danielson Framework for Teaching. School leaders and staff communicate high expectations to student and families and partner with them to promote college and career readiness.

Impact

There is mutual accountability among students, families and staff for supporting student progress focused on the academic and personal expectations tied to college and career readiness so that students are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are communicated to staff through the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school participated in the Talent Management Pilot which has resulted in a common language and understanding of expectations for professional practice and has continually deepened this work. While administration conducts regular cycles of observations and provides timely feedback through the use of Evernote, teachers also engage in teacher-facilitated observations, co-planning and professional development that supports school and student growth. Teachers examine student work and make direct links to instructional practices that accelerate or impede student understanding. Each summer, staff participates in summer sessions at New York University where they engage in the SUCCESS protocol to generate the Comprehensive Education Plan goals for the school and backwards plan to identify roles, responsibilities and timelines to support this work.
- The school uses Jump Rope which is a web-based program that tracks student progress in each Common Core Learning Standard in English language Arts and math. This system along with parent workshops and meetings give parents a clear understanding of academic expectations and their child's progress towards them. In addition, the school partners with Henry Street Settlement, New York University and the Middle School Success Center. These organizations support parents in accessing resources to support family needs as well as academic and social growth through counseling and tutoring.
- Common Core Standards provide the academic expectations for all learners. Ongoing feedback to students through Common Core aligned rubrics and report cards keep students involved in monitoring their progress toward achieving grade level goals. Career day helps students explore colleges and careers and gain an understanding of what they need to accomplish for each path. The Middle School Success Center along with school counselors provides ongoing advisement to students individually and in groups. For example, all students participate in Career Day where they can learn about different occupations and interests. Advisors support students in identifying schools that have concentrations in their area of interest, discuss the academic expectations for the school and support students in achievement and reflection as they explore their next steps.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers provide multiple entry points into high level tasks for all learners which advance student discussions and work products.

Impact

While these practices result in high levels of student participation in tasks, scaffolds and extensions for higher achieving students are not yet strategically implemented and student ownership in discussions is evolving.

Supporting Evidence

- Student work products show that students engage in several days of note taking, discussion and planning prior to each task. This supports engagement in conversation, allows students to share thinking and perspective and scaffolds organization of relevant information. In novel studies of *The Absolutely True Diary of Part-Time Indian* and *All Summer in a Day*, students had six essay choices for their final task that explored the elements of theme, character evolution and conflict. Student work demonstrates that all learners were supported in accessing high level texts and tasks. However, in classrooms observed, there was limited student engagement and ownership in whole group discussions.
- Across classrooms, co-teachers utilized flexible grouping to provide instruction in English Language arts and math. In a grade 6 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math class, based on an earlier diagnostic, one teacher worked with a group of four students to identify and compare information on tables and graphs. Students worked to understand dependent and independent variables and through a multi-step word problem determine the benefit of renting bicycles from one vendor over another. Students had the information translated in both Spanish and Chinese. Students had recording sheets where they recorded their own responses to information as well as the response of the class. The larger groups worked on the same task with similar scaffolds accessible, but moved more quickly through the content to independent practice. While all students were supported in accessing content, opportunities to extend the thinking of higher level students were missed as all students engaged in the same task and waited for teacher direction at the completion of each lesson step.
- Across classrooms, English language learners and students with disabilities were engaged in rigorous tasks that required them to demonstrate their thinking. There were some gaps in pacing and planning strategy that interrupted consistency. In an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, students of mixed grades, but similar language ability, worked to identify details and make inferences using works of art. Following the classroom discussion, the teacher began a word work segment on prefixes without closure of the motivation. The lesson plan stated that following the word work, students were going to engage in groups with a murder mystery task to establish claims, warrant and evidence structure. This execution interrupted the lesson flow and did not allow for a clear connection between the skill practiced in the motivation and its application to the literacy task.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits across all subjects for all learners and are planned and consistently refined using student work and data.

Impact

All learners are provided access to curricula and are actively engaged in rigorous tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a Common Core aligned interdisciplinary curricula and utilizes standardized writing rubrics across subject areas so that students engage in tasks, such as determining a big idea and identifying relevant details to support their claim after synthesizing information from multiple sources in all subject areas. This is accomplished by using fiction and non-fiction text in English language arts, social studies, science and the arts. Project arts classes explore vocabulary, symbolism and narrative expression through mixed media. This approach allows students to access and represent learning in multiple ways.
- In math, the school utilizes CMP3 as a resource and ensures that students are working with accuracy and application. In a similar multidisciplinary approach, students explore and apply math in other areas including science and the arts. Art projects involve the creation of structures involving measurement and scale to explore math concepts in real world situations. Students have participated in cooking classes with their parents to support their understanding of fractions and create a cookbook as a culminating project. Students engage in regular reflections to explain their math thinking.
- English language arts unit and lesson plans showed several curricula adaptations for students based on reading fluency and comprehension data. Grade 6 students were engaged in a small book club using *Bud, Not Buddy* with teacher facilitation using text annotation and questioning to support critical thinking skills and provide historical context before moving into *The Lightning Thief* which is a more complex text. Similarly, grade 8 students were engaged in a book study with *Night John* before advancing to *Copper Son*. Students studying *A Wrinkle in Time* and D'Aulaire's *Book of Greek Myths* were provided graphic novels, chunked text and audio support to support high level thinking and engagement with complex text.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across grades and classrooms, teachers use common summative and formative assessments aligned to curricula to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Rubrics and checklists for task assignments give all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities, actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Results from analyzing trends in feedback and item analyses on benchmark assessments are used to plan instruction and groupings.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Jump Rope which provides on-going tracking for student performance and progress in each Common Core Learning standard in English language arts and math. Teachers use the information from Jump Rope to plan for instructional groups and determine which standards may need to spiral into the next unit of study. Student report cards are also Common Core aligned and designed to communicate student progress in relation to each standard throughout the year, giving teachers and students a clear understanding of areas of strength and areas of need
- Each math unit of CMP3 includes a Check-Up 1, Check Up-2 and partner quiz before moving into the unit task. For example, in 6th grade a Check-Up 1 included several equations that involved the addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of decimals, some with borrowing and carrying, some not. The teacher used this information to determine math groupings for instruction and decided which students would be able to extend their skill to application in word problems.
- Common Core aligned rubrics for writing are used across content to provide students with clear expectations. Students use rubrics to self-monitor progress and in collaboration with teacher feedback determine their next learning steps. Teachers look at student work against rubrics using protocols to analyze trends and instructional practices have an impact on progress. For example, a teacher on the math team noticed through looking at student investigations at the end of each unit that students struggled with demonstrating their thinking. Teachers analyzed this to determine if this is a conceptual misunderstanding, a skill deficit or a lack of perseverance. Determined as deficits in math, teachers incorporated increased reflection opportunities, expanded focus on academic language and targeted skill-based instruction for small groups.

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

All teachers engage in professional collaborations focused on strengthening their instructional capacity, implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts, and promoting shared leadership structures.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in strengthened instructional practice and leadership capacity that has a school-wide influence on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers work in grade level, content area and interdisciplinary teams. The school received a three year grant that enables teachers to develop their facilitative leadership skills through a partnership with New York University. This has resulted in the consistent use of protocols to look at student work along with the creation of interdisciplinary inquiry teams. Interdisciplinary teams work in six week inter-visitation cycles where they examine student work, identify and implement instructional strategies, monitor progress and share out learning. The monitoring includes cross-content classroom visits and planning. This has resulted in common writing expectations across content areas, exploration of content through the arts, and strengthened both teachers’ instructional and leadership capacity.
- Working within various team structures has built teachers’ instructional capacity to meet the needs of a diverse population of learners. For example, serving the whole school, the English as a second language (ESL) teacher works directly with multiple grade level, unit themes and modified to scaffold up to academic rigor and promote the development of academic as well as conversational language. In turn, classroom teachers have implemented ESL strategies such as text annotation, visual supports and text previews to support students in content area classes.
- Teacher teams participate in professional studies around mentor texts to improve their instructional capacity to impact on student learning across the school. Presently, teachers are utilizing *Looking at Student Work* and *Building Academic Language* to support informed instructional decision-making for individual and groups of students along with improving questioning and discussion techniques to support higher level thinking and student ownership in discussions. Lesson plans consistently include essential questions and conversation protocols such as, “save the last word for me”, were used in classrooms.