



**Department of
Education**

Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Harbor Heights

Middle School M349

**306 Fort Washington Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10033**

Principal: Monica Klehr

**Date of review: May 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rafaela Landin**

The School Context

Harbor Heights is a middle school with 161 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 100% Hispanic students. The student body includes 98% English language learners and 2% 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 97.0%.

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	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	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 and staff consistently embed high expectations in all aspects of school culture, focusing on the Danielson Framework for Teaching, college and career readiness, and successfully partner with families for mutual understanding of those expectations.

Impact

Systems and structures that support a culture of high expectations, responsibilities, and professional collaboration for staff, students, and families, effectively communicate mutual accountabilities amongst all stakeholders for achieving the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations through professional learning sessions, weekly Harbor Heights News from the Principal's office, curricular planning meetings, and observation feedback sessions with teachers. In addition, teachers stated that during common planning sessions and team meetings, they constantly engage in professional dialogue and share practices that contribute to their success in the classroom.
- Curriculum maps created in Rubicon Atlas in all content areas, a cohesive unit plan template, rubrics and checklists for all performance tasks and a school wide template on best teaching practices, define for all teachers the expectations of teaching and learning at the school. Evaluation of unit plans and conversations with teachers revealed that teachers across grades and content areas use the Depth of Knowledge Framework to develop questions, focusing on level 3 and level 4 questions. A review of the lesson plan template and unit clearly delineate expectations for instruction for all staff. For example, a review of a social studies unit showed the unit overview, the enduring understanding and essential questions, content, grammar and language objectives, skills and domain specific vocabulary. The unit plans also lists specific strategies and differentiation to accommodate the different learning needs of the students such as small group instruction, chunking the information to be presented to students, assessments, and rubrics.
- Families and students are provided with an outline of upcoming units of study in all grades and subjects, thus supporting the school's efforts in partnering with families to ensure that students are supported at home with the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, teachers in grade 7 sent a newsletter in Spanish to all families communicating the objective of the math geometry unit. The newsletter explains how to help the students at home, how to have conversations centered on the unit, and the connections to the standards.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Teachers' pedagogy consistently provides scaffolds to ensure students experience rigorous instruction and engage in high-level thinking and discussions. Strategies and extensions produce meaningful work products, however, are not always strategically planned.

Impact

As a result, opportunities for extended learning and demonstration of high level student thinking, participation, and ownership, are inconsistently reflected across most classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- In some classrooms, students had opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks on their own, in pairs, or in groups, to build high critical thinking, participation and high level work products. In a grade 6 Word Generation class, students were asked to write a response supporting their position with relevant reasons to the question: Should handguns be illegal? To support students with domain specific vocabulary, students were provided with relevant vocabulary words to address the topic in discussions with partners and in groups. Students did a close read of an article from Word Generation about handguns. The activity was organized and provided cognitive challenge for the students to derive the learning from the task, the discussion and the reflection.
- A review of classwork, and other tasks completed by students, indicated that most students' work illustrates high levels of student thinking, participation and analytical reasoning. Tasks in all content areas also evidenced the school's efforts in providing multiple entry points to accommodate the individual learning needs of all students. The school uses native language strategically, graphic organizer, visuals and sentence starters to promote high level student thinking, discussions and work product. In a seventh grade class, students engaged in a Socratic seminar to discuss the topic of gun control. Students were provided with sentence starters to engage them in the discussion.
- In most classrooms visited, students participated in discussion by responding to teacher generated questions or teacher led discussions. Students were observed in small group instruction with teachers facilitating the learning, providing scaffolds and high level questions to engage students in the learning and press their thinking by asking questions such as, "Can you add to what he said?", "What did you discover?" "How do you know?" Most students were observed demonstrating high levels of discussion, participation and engagement in lessons. However, in three of the seven classes visited, students were not fully engaged in the discussion and didn't take responsibility for their role within group discussions.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

All curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Teachers use data and student work to plan and refine academic tasks and curricula.

Impact

The well aligned coherent curricula results in academic tasks that are designed to be engaging, rigorous and accessible; and promote college and career readiness for all students; including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- Conversations with the leadership and with teachers revealed that the school has created curriculum maps aligned with the Common Core State Standards in collaboration with the office of English language learners in the DOE. Additionally, the school has adopted CMP3 curriculum which is an inquiry based curriculum in English and Spanish. Unit plans include Common Core Standards and content standards, content and language objectives, differentiation and grouping strategies, skills, assessments and domain specific vocabulary, essential questions, performance tasks and rubrics.
- The school's decision to use the CODE X for ELA, CMP3 for math and the NYC DOE scope and sequence as resources to modify curricula and performance tasks for students supports the efforts of the school to build coherence across grades and content areas. For example, teachers use the on line Atlas curriculum platform to continue to plan, refine, and revise, all curricula that have been developed in the last three years. Refinement to the curricula and the units of study include the strategic use of native language during instruction, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, which is researched based and addresses the academic needs of emergent bilingual students. The use of graphic organizers and visual aids in all lessons to activate prior knowledge and build background knowledge and differentiated linguistic scaffolds provides students access to the curricula.
- Students' work in classrooms visited and tasks displayed in bulletin boards outside the classrooms across all content areas evidenced alignment to the Common Core State Standards and Content Standards. In addition, tasks evidenced rigorous habits and higher order skills and instructional strategies made to ensure access to the curricula. For example, students in eighth grade had to write an opinion essay based on a current event debate about who should replace Andrew Jackson on the twenty-dollar bill. Students were provided with graphic organizers, sentence starters, and the choice to write in English or Spanish to engage in the learning and to provide access to the task for all students.

Findings

Assessments, rubrics, and the school's grading policy, align to the curricula. Teachers consistently use ongoing checks for understanding to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level.

Impact

Students and teachers are provided with actionable feedback regarding student achievement across grades and subjects. Furthermore, teachers make effective adjustments to lesson plans and units of studies to meet the individual learning needs of all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses a variety of common assessments determined by Measures of Student Learning selections, running records, exit tickets, performance based assessments, end-of-unit tests, and teacher-created performance tasks, aligned to the curricula. In addition, the school has a school-wide professional development plan which delineates content assessments, type of assessments, purpose of assessments, grades, time frames, and who will get the information at the conclusion of the data analysis. Current data analysis of different data sources has revealed that students struggle to elaborate on evidence cited from the text, listening comprehension, analytical skills, processing, verbal skills and understanding the content. This instructional challenge was shared in inquiry teams and lessons were geared to supporting students with these findings. Classes are strategically reorganized using all data sources; inclusive of students' language proficiency to ascertain academic success. For example, in November, the school looked at the data for grade 7 in terms of NYS math assessments, ELA scores, years taking the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test and native language proficiency and restructured classes.
- A review of student work on bulletin boards inside and outside classrooms indicates that teachers use rubrics to assess students' writing. For example, a descriptive rubric used by teachers includes components such as organization and clarity, evidence and reasoning, language, and conventions. Additionally, the rubric stated specific next steps like "add a transitional word" and "work on punctuation and spelling".
- A review of lesson plans, units and classroom visits revealed the use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment to advance learning. For example, units of studies and lesson plans indicate that teachers check for understanding by using think-pair-share, turn-and-talk, small group discussions, questions at all four levels of the depth of knowledge (DOK), and exit slips. Teachers reported that they use the results of running records, unit tests, and focus questions, in each lesson to adjust or revise their unit plans for the next day lesson if needed. They use these results to group students for targeted instruction or to reteach lessons with different strategies or scaffolds to meet the learning needs of the students.

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

Teachers participate in structured, inquiry based professional development, focused on the school's instructional goals. Team collaborations provide a vehicle for teachers to have input on key decisions about the curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide efforts to effectively promote the school goals, including the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, and contribute to improved teacher pedagogy and student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams promote the implementation of Common Core Standards and the instructional shifts. Teachers are provided with opportunity to meet vertically and horizontally three (3) times per week by grade and by content. During a team meeting teachers were observed in their respective content area working together to make adjustments and reflecting on the curricula. The team was planning on a continuation of their work during the summer months and generating a list of resources to use in their revision of the curricula. Additionally, teachers were reflecting on the data obtained from the school's computer programs; specifically, ST math and Reflex math to decide if these programs are meeting the different learning needs of the student population in the school.
- Teacher leaders plan and facilitate professional development sessions, they establish agenda, and keep track of minutes. During the teacher team interview, some teachers reported that they have leadership roles within teacher teams. This allows them to share expertise with the staff and take ownership of their professional development.
- During both teacher team meetings, teachers articulated that the school provides them with opportunities for distributed leadership. Teachers articulated that they have opportunities to make decisions in the adjustment and revisions of the curricula and selection of instructional resources for use across grades. For example, teachers in this school generate a list of "Hot Topics", professional development opportunities based on staff surveys and results of the formal and informal observations. Once the list is generated, teachers volunteer to lead the professional learning activities through a series of workshops. This practice affords the school to build leadership capacity and have a voice in instructional practices that impact student learning.