Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Middle School 08Q

108-35 167th Street
Jamaica, New York 11433

Principal: Angela Green

Date of review: January 8, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Mabel Muñiz - Sarduy

The School Context

M.S.08 is a middle school with 496 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 55% Black, 21% Hispanic, 1% White, and 13% Asian students. The student body includes 12% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.3%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
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	**Celebration**	**Proficient**
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**	**Developing**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings:
High expectations are consistently messaged to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DFT) in trainings and other modes of communication. Performance updates keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact:
Structures that support the school's high expectations build buy-in and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, thus providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The staff policy manual and student parent handbook reinforce school – wide expectations for teaching and culture. The staff handbook is divided into sections of academics that include lesson planning, professional development, grading policy, observation policy, buddy teachers, and student work. The parent/student handbook highlights the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), instructional programs, performance requirements, school safety, special programs, afterschool programs and visitor's policy.

- Parents shared that teachers offer guidance and support and four times per year send updates on their child's progress via progress reports, weekly phone calls and letters mailed to home.

- Administration, staff and parents articulated the use of Achieve 3000, phone blast and "MY On" which helps support the instructional programs within the school. These programs are used at home and parents are able to view child progress through Skedula.

- The guidance counselor and administrators work together with student teachers to provide college trips and parent orientations to expose students to college and careers.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings:
Pedagogy provides coherent instruction from a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and aligned to the standards however multiple entry points, extensions and supports are inconsistent

Impact:
Across classrooms, curricula supports, multiple entry points and questioning and discussion techniques inconsistently provide engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs).

Supporting Evidence

- During a mathematics lesson in grade eight on Expanded Form, all students had the same task of showing the teacher how a problem can be used in expanded form. The teacher circulated around to see who understood expanded form without recording checks for understanding or making on the spot adjustments to engage other students in a more challenging task.

- In another class, special education sixth and seventh grade students were learning the numbers in Korean, however many students were able to understand how to say the numbers from English to Korean while others needed pictures or other scaffolds which were not evident. Tasks in classrooms were not consistently differentiated based on student needs.

- In classrooms visited, some students participated in class discussions. In one of the seven classrooms visited, students were able to explore their thinking, justify their conclusions and attempt to use evidence from the text to support their reasoning. Some students had talking stems to support their conversations.

- In most classrooms students worked in groups but in most cases all students worked on the same task, with no visible modifications for the struggling students or cognitively challenging tasks for accelerated learners.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient

Findings:
All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) Higher – order skills are consistent for all learners across grades and content.

Impact:
The school's curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Unit plans and lesson plans promote higher order thinking skills including scaffolds and extensions of task.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans in all content areas emphasize rigorous habits and higher–order thinking skills across grades, subjects, and/ or for English language learners and Special Education Students.

- Unit plans show tasks that require students to engage in complex tasks with multiple designs of academic tasks with scaffolds and multi- entry points. For example, In a unit plan for "Stories of Survival" teachers planned essential questions, CCLS integration, writing teaching points skills and strategies, vocabulary, a Reconstruct/Deconstruct protocol, and assessments across the unit aligned to Depth of Knowledge matrix.

- Curriculum maps on Exponential Functions had skills and strategies that represent an exponential function with varied representations such as tables, graphs, or equation. Students are expected to make connections among the patterns of change in a table, graph, and equation of an exponential function.

- The school uses the New York City approved Codex and CMP3. They also supplement using Learn Zillion, Achieve 3000, Word Generation and Close reading of text.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings:
The school uses common assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics, tracks student progress, however the results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Impact:
The school's system to monitor progress is evident however through data analysis as well as during instruction there is inconsistency across many classrooms with the lack of use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self – assessment so teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses English language arts /Mathematics state exams, performance assessments and baseline assessments in Literacy and Mathematics, which provide information on student performance and progress.

- The analyses of these assessments are not used effectively in the classrooms. For example in a 6th grade mathematics class, the students had to identify the rate of speed for a specific unit trait, to see how fast the train goes. Students had the same task as the teacher went around checking for understanding of this real world application mathematics problem however the instructor did not record her findings and her feedback did not consistently push student thinking.

- In one of the inquiry team meetings the teachers looked at the student work of three students who used the same graphic organizer to determine the rate of speed, however the team was unclear about the purpose of viewing this student work and did not push the thinking of the teacher with regards to incorporating multiply entry points and the purpose of task.

- Teachers have rubrics and checklist to support the thinking of students however these tools were solely on the student desks and not used or referenced. Additionally, self or peer feedback was not evident.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Developing

Findings:
Teachers participate in professional teamwork to analyze student work and data to adjust curricula to inform instructional decisions.

Impact:
Teachers are engaged in a structured professional collaboration on teams using an inquiry approach however this work is ineffectively connected to goals and does not result in improved teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly following a protocol to examine student work and engage in making adjustments to lessons or tasks to ensure that teams understand the needs of all students. However, this practice was not evident during the review. For example, in a teacher team meeting, one teacher shared a graphic organizer of six squares, for her English language learners. The graphic organizer was presented to the team as evidence of student work in relationship to a word problem on unit rate. These three samples of student work were labeled “a,b,c”. The teacher shared with team that this task took two periods. There was minimal work on graphic organizers for two periods of work time by students. Minimal student data therefore was analyzed and there was minimal adjustments or acceleration made to this task for the next lesson. Teacher practice as a result of the meeting was not strengthened.

- Teacher teams meet regularly using the inquiry cycle of protocol, research, agenda, data analysis and looking at student work however this cycle is not strengthening teacher practice and student outcomes. For example, in the majority of the classrooms minimal adjustments, checks for understanding, instructional shifts and adjustments were evident in the classrooms we visited.

- Administration is providing leadership development through informal and formal observation. After review of several samples of supervisors’ observations, I saw many concrete samples of supervisors providing constructive feedback to continue to improve teacher pedagogy. Administrators shared samples of specific questions that can be asked based on lesson. Continue to ensure that we regularly observe teachers in a timely manner and provide feedback to push the thinking of teachers.

- In the schools professional development plan teachers are provided with professional development on the gathering, analysis, dissemination and use of data however in the inquiry team I observed the attempt to analyze three work products on the same task with minimal feedback from colleagues which did not yield suggestions or next steps for the teacher. It was not clear as to why teachers were looking at this work.