



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Adrien Block

Middle School Q025

**34-65 192 Street
Queens
NY 11358**

Principal: Mary Ellen Beirne

**Date of review: February 3, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

The School Context

Adrien Block is a middle school with 799 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 23% Hispanic, 25% White, and 50% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 96.3%.

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	Celebration	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	Proficient
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:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Common assessments are administered and results are analyzed along with data from ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessments.

Impact

Teachers make adjustments to curricula to meet students' learning needs identified from analysis of assessment data.

Supporting Evidence

- The results from teacher-created common pre- and post-assessments are entered into the Data Driven Classroom (DDC) in Skedula so that teacher teams and other content area teachers are able to monitor and track student progress as they revise and adjust curricula. The data specialist provides item analysis of these assessments to teachers so they plan instruction for specific groups of students. Teachers also track how well students perform on daily Do Now assignments and use the results to determine the need for re-teaching. The principal works with the data specialist to analyze State assessment data. The results are used to determine how teachers are assigned and are shared with the staff as they plan future instruction.
- Teachers use a variety of ongoing checks for understanding to help them evaluate student progress by such as students indicating their level of understanding through signals such as "thumbs up, thumbs down," "fist-to-five," or "red-yellow-green." Additionally, several teachers were observed taking notes on student performance during group work and the teachers stated they use these notes to determine groupings for the lessons that follow.
- Students conduct peer- and self-assessments of their assignments and projects and track their grades on Pupilpath to help them improve their work. They also track their progress toward meeting goals they have set for themselves, such as understanding the causes and effects of World War I, by writing reflections on their progress at the end of the unit. One student set a goal of understanding scale factors based on the results of the unit pre-assessment.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Teachers are beginning to use strategies to provide multiple entry points into the curricula but these practices, such as fostering high levels of student discourse, are not yet consistent.

Impact

Students do not consistently produce high levels of discussion or evenly demonstrate high levels of higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is focusing on increasing student discourse across grades and content areas. One student indicated that preparing for a Socratic Seminar helps her clarify her thinking about claims and counterclaims because she hears what other people are thinking. In one social studies lesson, students discussed the working conditions at an early 20th Century factory and cited the page number of text that supported their claim. However, there were missed opportunities for this deep level of student-level discussion in some classes. For example, in another class the discussion was controlled by the teacher, which limited students from sharing different strategies for comparing proportional and non-proportional relationships with each other.
- Student work occasionally reflects high levels of creativity and participation. For example, a student with a physical disability drew his idea for a robot chair that responds to verbal commands. In one class, students conducted a gallery walk to collect evidence related to the role that belief systems play in our society. They had choice as to which stations they would visit first, but they were required to collect evidence at all stations and share it with their fellow group members.
- A school-wide focus on delivering instruction based on identified student needs was seen in several classrooms where teachers were observed assigning groups of students to work on specific projects as an outgrowth of work completed in a prior lesson. However, this practice was not consistent across the school.
- Some English language learners use i-pads to access Google translator programs and refer to task specific rubrics to guide them while they work in groups to complete projects.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and teachers align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and create rigorous tasks in unit and lesson plans.

Impact

Coherence in curricula and the development of rigorous habits promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Expeditionary Learning for literacy instruction, CMP3 for math, and follows the New York State content standards for social studies and science. The teachers use a curriculum map template they developed to ensure that plans address learning targets, content and skills, goals for the unit, and access for all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners, as well as extensions to accelerate learning. The staff began writing unit plans over the summer and focused specifically on engaging students in tasks that involve deep thinking, such as posing questions and problems for which there are no single, clear answers. For example, a science unit on weather and the atmosphere requires students to examine information about the history and present state of the atmosphere and “predict what you think our atmosphere will be like in the year 2050.”
- The school offers Common Core Algebra I and Living Environment to eighth graders to accelerate their progress toward meeting high school graduation requirements. One hundred percent of the students who took the Living Environment Regents exam in June 2014 passed the test with a 65 or better, 87% of the students scored 85 or higher. All of the students who took the Common Core Algebra I Regents exam in June 2014 passed with 65 or better and 44% of them scored 85 or better.
- The principal and assistant principals review lesson plans and work with instructional leads and content specialists from their Network to ensure inclusion of the instructional shifts, especially citing text from sources, stating a claim and supporting arguments in alignment with the Common Core Learning Standards. They give feedback to teachers on their plans, such as asking a new teacher to plan a concluding activity that demonstrates what learning has taken place. A subsequent lesson plan for this same teacher included an exit slip requiring students to cite evidence they had collected that either supported, or did not support, their claim and asking them to identify questions they still have.
- In one lesson plan, a set of worksheets is explicitly designed to help students with different skill levels prepare for a whole class Socratic seminar. One worksheet requires students to answer a series of questions dealing with the Mayor’s cellphone policy in their own words. Another version of this worksheet designed for Advanced ELLs, provides a sentence starter “Mayor DeBlasio and the schools think to resolve the cell phone issue by...” The third version, for intermediate ELLs, adds more support by providing a more detailed sentence starter. The fourth version, for beginner ELLs, has a multiple-choice selection, which asks the students to choose the answer they agree with the most. Because students are supported at their own skill level, they are able to prepare to participate fully in the subsequent class discussion.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

High expectations for teachers, and student performance linked to college and career readiness, are made clear to staff, students, and parents.

Impact

The school's programs and protocols facilitate sharing information about student progress and teachers are held accountable for growing in their instructional practices according to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses online systems for communicating to parents about meetings, distributes notices and newsletters, and tracks student performance. Parents indicated they are comfortable using the Pupilpath program to keep current on what work is expected of their children and how they are doing with homework and attendance. In January, there were 3,749 Skedula logins by parents, and 11,350 student logins. One parent stated that she knows how her son is doing because his "scores show he is doing well." Another parent indicated that the school is teaching her children to be responsible and to problem solve on their own.
- The principal reinforces the high expectations for teachers in the Principal's 411 newsletter and through the observation process. The school leaders confer with teachers about improving their pedagogical skills by looking at student work as the basis for the post-observation discussions. After analyzing the work produced during a lesson on the philosophies of ancient civilizations, one supervisor requested that a new teacher conduct intervisitations with an experienced teacher to learn strategies for differentiating instruction. Feedback to teachers is aligned to the components of the Danielson Framework and holds teachers accountable for improvement by regularly indicating when a follow up conversation will occur.
- The mission statement of the school communicates the expectations that staff and parents will work together so that students develop the "skills for a successful transition to high school, college, and future careers." The school reinforces these expectations through programs like a work-study program with the Museum of Jewish Heritage where eighth grade students learn about the workplace while they make real-world connections to the content of their social studies curriculum.

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

Findings

Teachers engage in collaborative teams to promote implementation of the Common Core, integrate the instructional shifts, and analyze assessment data.

Impact

Teachers improve their instructional practices that help students achieve their goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are programmed for one period per week to meet with their grade level department inquiry teams, for example, the sixth grade math teacher team. Teachers also meet at least once a month in cross-grade vertical departmental teams. The teachers collaborate on these teams to revise curricula and lesson plans and explore strategies to improve their practice, such as expanding the use of exit tickets and student self-assessment to help them revise lesson plans. Every few weeks the supervisors rotate to attend team meetings.
- There is a Professional Learning Leadership (PLL) team, which helps to plan professional development (PD) and make changes to the PD calendar. This team conducted a survey of the staff to gather information on the support teachers want to help them improve their practice. This team also looks at aggregated observation results from Advance and trends in student achievement to recommend specific topics for whole school or department PD.
- Teachers were observed reviewing and analyzing data from a mid-unit assessment on proportion and sharing anecdotal information about the students they shared. They agreed that the assessment was a challenging one for their students and discussed whether it actually measured what they had taught in the unit so far. They discussed the timeline of instruction in order to administer the end-of-unit assessment before the upcoming break and the interventions they would implement, such as collecting the daily Do Now assignments to determine what topics needed to be re-taught. The next steps for this team included looking at the alignment between the planned instruction and the end-of-unit assessment.
- One teacher commented that participating in the frequent professional collaborations is important to her because she wants “to stay current on content and technology” in order to meet the needs of the student population that changes year-to-year. Another teacher commented that the teams help focus attention on the fact that not all students learn the same way and collaborating with colleagues helps them to modify instruction and provide targeted resources so that groups of students can make progress toward meeting their goals. Teachers indicated that they are focusing on increasing the use peer-and self-assessments in order to address a school goal of improving outcomes for ELLs through strategic formative assessment practices.