



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

I.S. 077

Middle School Q077

**976 Seneca Avenue
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Joseph Miller

**Date of review: May 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Marion Wilson**

The School Context

Intermediate School 77 is a middle school with 1083 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population consists of 3% Black, 74% Hispanic, 13% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 24% 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 93.6%.

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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

**3.4 High
Expectations**

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff about professionalism, instruction, and communication and successfully partners with families to further student progress towards college and career readiness.

Impact

As a result of these findings, teachers receive high quality, structured, on-going training and professional development and are held accountable for expectations. In addition, families have taken on an active role in the school community to create successful partnerships throughout the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are given surveys at the beginning of the year and have a menu of options to select and participate in professional learning activities which best suit their professional learning needs. New teachers receive support from coaches and or the administrative team on planning and crafting lessons based on what students need. For example, the reading specialist noticed that students' speaking skills lacked sophistication during class discussion. Strategic focus is placed on working with the new teachers in the school and protocols are modeled for them on how to incorporate more student to student discussions using think pair shares allowing students to participate in fishbowl activities across content areas.
- Administration meets with teachers to review elements of the Danielson Framework for Effective Teaching and have frequent cycles of observations with feedback for next steps as evidenced by the professional development calendar for the school year, walkthrough feedback and identifiable next steps to improve teaching and learning. For example, there are a series of workshops on incorporating more student voice in class activities. Sessions are planned with a myriad of activities including but not limited to professional development on strategic questioning techniques and inter class visitations.
- The school, in collaboration with input from parents and in response to a parent survey, creates a year-long calendar of parent workshops which include, but are not limited to, workshops based on social, academic or emotional needs of their children. Parents are familiarized and knowledgeable about the curriculum and academic expectations for their children, thereby strengthening the home school connection. For example, parents shared their concerns about not understanding the homework and the school has arranged for a buddy system to help parents complete homework assignments by calling a teacher or working with another parent.
- Parents indicated that student lead parent teacher conferences help them make meaning of the progress of toward mastery of the standards. Parents also shared that they have access to a Google document, which they receive in both English and Spanish which shows all of their children's work products and the areas needing improvement.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by Danielson Framework for Teaching. In addition, across classrooms student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

As a result, teachers work with students in small groups based on their needs through explicit modeling for students of the expectations for the lesson and the integrated use of technology tools across most classrooms. In addition, students are able to have conversations about their work and cite evidence from the text to support their thinking and justify their explanations.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teachers identify and generate prioritized learning objectives and teach lessons to support those objectives to whole and small groups of students. For example, in one classroom, students were asked to come up with different ways to add three numbers, while in another class, students were asked to form and state an opinion and support the opinion with reasons from text based evidence. Learning objectives were written in an explicit manner in order for both teacher and student to be fully aware of the expectations of student learning at the end of the lesson.
- Teachers use established structures and routines which include collaborative protocols for students to have conversations and discussions in small groups based on questions posed by the teacher. Across classes, teachers assigned group leaders who facilitated team conversations and in others discussions took place in partnerships. For example, students were asked in a Science class with the ESL teacher to take their pulse and make connections to the heart. Some students had difficulty responding to the teacher's questions as the necessary relevant background information was not provided with appropriate scaffolds to support beginner ELLs. However, in another class, students worked together to create different ways of solving problems related to motion.
- In many classes, students were engaged in conversations with their peers reflecting the use of sentence frames or accountable talk stems, agreeing and disagreeing with claims presented by classmates. For example, in one 7th grade class, students responded to the teacher's prompt about the importance of analyzing the author's purpose of the story they were reading and offer text based evidence to support the actions of the main character in the story. In addition, students were heard asking clarifying questions such as, "What's your evidence?" or "Could you elaborate more about your reason?"

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and/or content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across most grades and subjects for most learners.

Impact:

As a result, all performance tasks in mathematics or literacy are integrated with either science or social studies. In addition, academic tasks require students to demonstrate their understanding of domain related concepts and students are able to support their thinking across most classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- While the school has purposefully mapped out curriculum maps and unit maps, they continue to create and implement integrated units of study for all grades. For example, the essential question for Unit 5 based on New York City's Scope and Sequence, asks students the following, "How do competing views of power and morality lead to global conflict?" Teachers have incorporated mathematics into the unit asking students to compare the mobilization of monetary and fiscal resources across developed and developing countries. Connections are made to the school's prioritized standards where students are required to support claims with logical reasoning and relevant evidence from primary sources.
- All performance tasks are created by teachers by looking through the lens of Depth of Knowledge (DOK) for mathematics and literacy based on the curricula materials and other supplementary materials used by the school for all core subject areas. For example, the seventh grade mathematics plan showed activities where students had to complete an assignment about writing numbers in scientific notation. Students were asked to reflect on the video they watched entitled, "The Power of Ten," and then relate the contents to the magnitude of an object. The task was modified for the tiered learners.
- The school has created tasks which require students to explain their thinking and are created to allow additional Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports for English language learners and students with disabilities or to challenge advanced learners as appropriate and needed. For example, one plan utilized short stories from an online web source in different lexile levels dealing with the same content. Therefore students are provided with the same material based on their reading levels. Another example was found in the eighth grade math curriculum where activities provided multiple ways for students to identify and explain the absolute value of numbers and to express numbers in exponential notation.

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school also uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and most subject areas.

Impact

As a result, almost all assignments are created with student friendly checklists given to students prior to the commencement of projects or tasks so they know the expectations for quality work and are informed of what is required of them. In addition, the school uses formative and summative data to look at the students individually, as a class, a grade, or by subject area.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics and checklists are used throughout all grades across classrooms and most subject areas in grades 6- 8, in which students understand the use of these tools to inform their learning and next steps. Students in the math class utilized a self-assessment rubric where they were monitoring their understanding of the math problem and assessing their understanding of the problem, and indicated whether they chose the correct strategy and provided evidence with a drawing and provided a written explanation of the steps they took to complete the problem.
- Teachers conference with students based on the use of these common assessment tools including formal and informal tools. The school is in the process of creating a clear picture of student progress towards goals and of identifying supports to increase mastery for English language learners, for students with disabilities and for advanced students across classrooms. This will include a standard system to compile the multiple sources of data into one central location.
- Students and teachers have a common understanding and can explain the use of Glows and Grows, as well as the purpose for self and peer reflections to improve their work and master content material. For example, in the small group student meeting, students shared feedback from their teachers on their work and the subsequent changes they made. One sixth grade student shared about reading a book entitled, Flowers for Algernon, and then having to write a personal narrative essay using a rubric. The teacher wrote comments on the essay that encouraged the student to elaborate on the details and reactions of the major episodes in his first draft, which helped him improve his score under the elaboration category of the rubric.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations using an inquiry approach that focuses on improved student achievement for all learners. Additionally, embedded leadership structures provide a means for teachers to make key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact

Teacher teams function at a high level of collaboration and cooperation resulting in improved teaching practices across the school with highly effective practices displayed. In addition, teachers are able to make individual classroom level decisions which affect student learning causing even greater student progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers have opportunities to engage in inquiry work, curricula development or other professional activities. For example, the Social Studies team utilized the Looking at Student Work protocol to examine student writing on the last summative assessment that was recently administered. Teachers noticed the pre and post writing assessment based on the prompt, "Would it have been possible for the Americans and British to reach a compromise in 1776?" Teachers noted student use of a formal writing style, the integration of content vocabulary within the topic and the use of concluding sentences. Similarly, the inquiry work of the Social Studies team would be shared with all of the other teachers for the same students across content areas.
- To ensure extension of student thinking, teachers engage in inquiry-based collaborations that meet twice a week to analyze the integration and collected responses from Think-Pair-Share activities and how these strategies help to improve student thinking across classrooms. These meetings have significantly impacted the quality of student work for all students including subgroups. Understanding the gap in performance tasks, teachers engage in work to revise and modify existing tasks to better suit the needs of their varied learners. For example, the social studies team examined the task that was given and made adjustments to curricula and future tasks based on student work products.
- School leaders and teachers offer specific and clear examples of teacher leadership that illustrate how teachers and teacher leaders play a vital role in school-level decision-making. For example, the school uses online resources to post minutes and student work from teams in an effort to help all teachers to reflect on their practice and achievement. The website contains voluntary videotaped lessons where teachers can discuss best practices or plans for improvement outside of the administrative process.
- Administrators and teachers are able to identify distributed leadership structures that are deeply-rooted in the school's day to day operations and articulate how they serve as a conduit for teacher input in strategic decisions that build capacity and that affect student achievement. All teachers are part of one core team and also related departmental/subject area teams. For example, some teams are the data team, mathematics team, social studies team, literacy team, field trip team, and professional development team. Using the professional learning guide, teams assess and evaluate their own professional learning and make self-directed revisions as necessary.