



# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Mamie Fay School**

**Elementary-Middle School Q122**

**21-21 Ditmars Boulevard  
Queens  
NY 11105**

**Principal: Pamela Sabel**

**Date of review: February 26, 2015**

**Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

## The School Context

Mamie Fay is an elementary/middle school with 1377 students from grades pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 6% Black, 24% Hispanic, 36% White, and 32% Asian students. The student body includes 05% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Effective structures and systems are in place to ensure staff consistently communicates high expectations for all stakeholders. School engages parents in meaningful partnerships to support student progress.

### Impact

Pathways to college and career readiness are conveyed and owned by staff members, parents and students towards successful educational experiences, resulting in a culture of mutual accountability for those expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are communicated by administration through a staff handbook, emails, school memorandums, faculty conferences and feedback from classroom visits. Extended cabinet meetings plan professional development based on school goals and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school utilizes the Understanding by Design Template, which provides clear guidelines for lesson planning and preparation.
- Parents stated the principal and teachers know their children's goals and challenge them. Parents of special needs students agreed that there were high expectations for their children and that their children received the same curriculum with scaffolds and supports. Parents also said they have a voice in school decisions. Many of them are Learning Leaders and volunteer at the school.
- Parent workshops provide information on the importance of expectations to meet the common core learning standards. The staff regularly sends parents "News & Views" Journal Newsletters, which includes letters from administrators, articles on educational topics such as the importance of reading, and information on school wide events including assemblies, Family Night and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) Culture Night. They also receive updates on e-board and information on their child's performance via an online grading system Engrade, formal and informal conversations, emails and notes in agenda books.
- Students maintain portfolios with their graded work with rubrics that are common core aligned to ensure that high expectations are met. The Honor Roll requirements are set for each grade with clear expectations for academic performance, participation and conduct. Students engage in project based interdisciplinary learning activities that promote college and career readiness skills such as researching using multiple sources, evaluating and analyzing informational text, building stamina and formalizing a debate. The school holds a Career Day and expose students to a variety of job opportunities. Project Citizen and community service gets students interested in civic issues and public policy. Sports, visual and performing arts instruction further enrich their lives.
- The school strives to maintain ongoing, clear lines of verbal and written communication with the community. The principal said that they endeavor to both deepen family understanding of what "college and career readiness" means for their children as well as empower families to support their children in exceeding those expectations. They orchestrate numerous events and opportunities to partner with and engage families in learning including family math.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school uses performance-based rubrics, grading policies and common assessments that are aligned to key standards throughout the school. However, there are a few missed opportunities in maximizing assessment results to adjust curricula and instruction and for providing actionable feedback to student's needs.

### Impact

Teachers and students were able to gauge next steps, to provide clear feedback to students and to adjust instructional practices in each grade. As a result, most students are aware of their next learning toward meeting their goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students are taught how to use rubrics and checklists to assess their work and understand their next steps. They engage in peer and self-assessments, and goal setting with their teachers based on test data. Most students articulated their learning.
- Teachers review multiple common assessments including running records, baseline assessments, performance tasks, chapter and unit assessments and conference notes. They use this information to determine trends within the grade, make instructional modifications and to set learning goals for students.
- Common assessment analysis drives curricular and instructional adjustments. Teachers collaborate on designing and modifying instruction based on data results. Feedback to students is accurate, specific and timely to advance learning. The middle school midterm exams are project- based and include both individual and group work. Google Docs is used to track student work and assessments include written research reports and presentations.
- Curricular decisions are made based on assessment results. Programs such as Heinemann Writing Units of Study were added to supplement the writing curriculum, Recipe for Reading, Fountas & Pinnell guided reading, and Great Leaps were added to meet the needs of students based on running records reading results.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core and content standards, strategically integrate the instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions to build coherence. Curricula and academic tasks are planned using student work and data.

### Impact

There is coherence across grades and subjects promoting college and career readiness for all students. Planning provides access for diverse learners to be cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school implements specific programs that align with the Common Core standards including, Go math, Ready Gen, balanced literacy, CodeX and Engage NY. Supplementary programs and materials such as Recipe for Reading, Heinemann, Teachers' College writing units, and Foundations are integrated to support writing and phonics skills. Teachers meet to refine curricular and academic tasks using student work as evidenced by lesson plans that provide access to a variety of leveled groups. All units and lesson plans have a clearly articulated learning objective, vocabulary development and high order questions.
- The school has a thoughtful and clearly articulated approach to interdisciplinary curriculum design. Students have a range of opportunities to build both skills as well as dig deeply into important topics such as the Civil war and Ancient Egypt. One task in a math unit called Rollercoaster Races expects students to use established variables to create, test and design vehicles. Other tasks include reading *Charlotte's Web* and creating a farm, listening to gardening experts, research organic foods, and give oral presentations. Curricula reflect the full inclusion of all special education students by delineating special supports as well as extensions for students at mastery. Visual and performing arts further enrich the curriculum.
- Students produce a large amount of written work that greatly reflects important and relevant skills such as text-based arguments. The unit teaches how to present ideas, concepts and information through the selection, organization and analysis of relevant science and social studies content. Students have access to conversations and discussions as they research various on-line sources to gather information that proves their claims.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### **Findings**

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide entry points into the curricula to engage all learners including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) in appropriate challenging tasks and student discussions.

### **Impact**

Academic tasks, work products and classroom discussions engage students in demonstrating higher-order thinking, high-level extensions and student ownership of learning.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In the vast majority of classrooms, teachers engaged students in challenging work, which required reasoning and thought. Teachers facilitated as students took a greater role in their own learning. High levels of student thinking and participation culminates in meaningful work products that include interdisciplinary projects and student choice in task and presentation of learning. In one class, students developed “*Smoking Exposed*”, a journal magazine on the hazards of smoking. There were articles and information related to all content areas including English, Spanish, math literacy, social studies, and science. Students included graphs on the cost of cigarettes, wrote persuasive and argumentative essays, did projects on the effects of smoking on the respiratory system and drew political cartoons.
- Teaching strategies provide multiple entry points that engage all learners. Teachers use multiple intelligences and strategies that focus on students learning styles to differentiate instruction for higher-level students and provide access for all. For example in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade class, the objective was for students to be able to introduce a topic clearly and to ensure that the structure for their *Of Mice and Men* literary essay introduction was accurate and compelling. Students had a sample written by the teacher with highlighted parts and labels to record the understanding of specific structure organization to visually assist and support learning. Students exchanged their introductions and gave each other constructive feedback using a rubric regarding structure and content. Advanced students were writing their thesis statements and finding evidence for their supporting details.
- The 8<sup>th</sup> grade lesson on nitrogen fixers asked students to explore the question “What role do various nitrogen fixers have within their specific ecosystems?” Students engaged in a discussion around essential questions including “How are we connected to other organisms within ecosystems?” Students conducted research on their own self-selected nitrogen fixing plant and charted their findings. Students worked in cooperative learning groups with assigned roles as teacher facilitated learning. They were given reading and vocabulary sheets to use as tools during research.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Teacher teams strategically engage in teacher-led structured inquiry based professional collaborations. There are distributive leadership opportunities for staff to make instructional decisions based on assessment data.

### Impact

Instructional capacity has strengthened through the alignment of teacher collaborations with school goals. Teachers' impact on instructional decisions has improved student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders provide ample meeting time through flexible scheduling, strategic use of common preps, facilitation, protocols trainings and looking at student work. There are strong professional learning communities with increased levels of distributed leadership, improved communication about what is happening across grades and increased teacher participation in decision making that impacts students' success. According to running record results, 70% of students are now on grade level or above due to the decision to focus on guided reading.
- Teacher teams engage in collaborative practice using the inquiry approach to improve classroom practice. Inquiry is focused on the specific needs of the students based on student assessments. Data analysis within teams improves curricula, teaching practices and student learning. An action plan is developed by the team based on this analysis. For example, the 4<sup>th</sup> grade Inquiry team analysis of student writing samples, led to the refinement of the writing curriculum. The plan included supplementing the writing curriculum with tools, exemplars and lessons that target students' ability to utilize text-based evidence to support their claims.
- Grade teams develop standards based rubrics to assess student work and use them to norm across each grade. Inquiry team members collaboratively make key decisions involving curriculum revisions, lesson plans development, and teaching strategies. Many of the teams have refined their inquiry with improved focus on multiple entry points as they develop plans and teaching strategies to support students with special needs. The adoption of Foundations has assisted students in developing phonics skills and has led to first graders improvement in decoding.
- There are embedded distributed leadership structures that influence instructional decisions. There is an extended cabinet, curriculum and instruction team, and a professional development team, which all include teacher leaders. Grade/department leaders serve as liaisons across grades and administration. The ELLs, SWDs, and gifted teacher teams attended workshops and training and turn keyed important understandings and strategies, which the vast majority of teachers now implement.