



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Ronald Mc Nair**

**Elementary-Middle School Q147**

**218-01 116 Avenue  
Queens  
NY 11411**

**Principal: Anne Cohen**

**Date of review: April 29, 2014  
Lead Reviewer: Lenon Murray**

## The School Context

Ronald Mc Nair is an elementary-middle school with 686 students from grade pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 95% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.5%.

## 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>Proficient</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share and on whom they are focused. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built teacher leadership capacity.

### Impact

The analysis of student work for students that teachers have in common is resulting in improved teacher practice, increased student performance and empowered teacher leaders who have input in key decision making involving instruction and student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher leaders, who represent each subject area department or grade level, meet weekly with the instructional cabinet to discuss professional development and teacher practices. They review school data to address school-wide gaps in performance and support the implementation of school-wide initiatives. During a team meeting, an eighth grade English language arts (ELA) teacher shared her experience in supporting a special education student who struggled with the concept of text-based writing. This student was in her group for re-teaching. Following the implementation of graphic organizers, inclusion of tiered texts and self-assessments checklists, the student was able to identify his areas of challenge and work with the teacher to improve his writing performance. The increased collaboration among teachers has provided a greater foundation upon which teachers can refine the ability to discuss and modify curricula, analyze student work, and brainstorm new innovations in teaching and learning.
- Teacher teams partner with community-based organizations, such as the New York Junior Tennis League (NYJTL) and they attend professional learning opportunities outside the school building. Teachers explained that they were empowered to have quality input on decisions affecting the selection and refinement of curricula resources and the evaluation, placement and grouping of students.
- The school data specialist collects and organizes student performance data into a school-wide tracking system so that teacher teams are able to track performance of individual students and groups of students over the course of the year. This enables teachers to more effectively analyze assessment data and make practical recommendations for improved instruction. After analyzing results, the teams highlight trends and noticings. The middle school ELA team saw that a subgroup of students had great difficulty referring to text evidence in their writing. They then selected anchor papers that teachers could use to provide explicit instruction.

# Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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## Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching strategies, including questioning, scaffolds in English or the native language, and routines are beginning to provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

## Impact

While teaching practices across classrooms are becoming aligned to the curricula, they inconsistently provide multiple entry points, leading to an uneven 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

- Across classrooms, there were limited teaching strategies used to accommodate a variety of learners in the classroom, including ELLs and students with disabilities. The vast majority of questions (more than 95%) were of low cognitive demand falling at levels one and two on Webb’s Depth of Knowledge chart. These involved basic recognition, recall and comprehension. In one grade three class, the teacher discussed a poem that left the students unclear. Students were engaged and excited during the discussion, but were unable to explain the purpose of the lesson.
- School leaders use feedback from the Danielson Framework for Teaching to support teachers in implementing the Common Core Learning Standards. The curriculum is being implemented during daily instruction. The teachers are currently assessing several multiple entry point strategies and instructional practices that have been implemented this year, particularly with ELLs and SWDs.
- The school has shared that the Danielson Framework for Teaching has encouraged the teachers to move the instruction away from teacher-dominated lesson delivery to a model where students take ownership of their learning. The framework enables teachers to place increased emphasis on conversations that are initiated and sustained by students. The only questions that students asked in the classrooms visited were for clarification or basic comprehension. In a grade eight mathematics class, students were working in groups on a series of simultaneous equations. The vast majority of students was already familiar with the content and performed the tasks easily. No additional work of increased challenge or assignments that required higher-order thinking was evident.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. The curricula integrate the instructional shifts and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

The school's purposeful decisions build coherence while promoting college and career readiness for all learners including ELLs and SWDs. Rigorous curriculum and academic tasks are designed for all students to be cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school's leaders and faculty have worked diligently to align all curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards. The school's curricula include argumentative text-based writing and critical thinking components that satisfy Common Core demands and focus on challenging non-fiction texts while addressing the instructional shifts. Students are expected to properly cite evidence across all content areas. This practice is evident in writing, speaking and presenting where students are expected to use various non-fiction sources to defend their thinking. In math, the curriculum builds fluency by recycling skills, such as number ordering, fractions and mental math throughout the school year.
- Lesson plans were available for all the classrooms visited. All included a focus on vocabulary building so that students are able to engage in grade-specific complex texts using academic vocabulary. Lesson plans also contained learning targets, the Common Core Standard addressed, and essential questions that teachers may scaffold over more than one day. The administration explained that they constantly review and analyze student work along with teacher teams to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum. Whenever evidence emerged of individual students or groups of students struggling with a concept, teacher teams diagnose and adjust the curriculum to meet students' learning needs.
- Teacher teams across grades and subject areas use student work and assessment data to plan and revise curricula and academic tasks in order to engage all students cognitively including ELLs and SWDs. Unit plans illustrate many different designs of academic tasks with related scaffolds for struggling students. Teachers coach students on college and career readiness skills, such as note-taking, project simulation, debate and discussion techniques and research skills. Teacher teams adjusted unit timelines and added various leveled texts to ensure student engagement at all levels of performance.

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and reflect ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment. Common assessments determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

**Impact**

The use of assessments aligned to curricula, checks for understanding, grading practices and the analysis of student learning outcomes provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers use these results to adjust curriculum and instruction and enable them to flexibly meet students' learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The administration shared that teachers grade tasks and assignments and analyze their data prior to adjusting the instruction based on this information. This practice was evident during an ELA team meeting. Teams agree upon the standards they wish to assess based on the summative assessment data from the previous year, MOSL yearlong results and unit tests. Teachers use pre- and post- tests as a basic part of each unit. This updated data enables them to identify high leverage standards upon which to focus. Standards-based curricula are then taught and assessed with the results shared during team meetings. Teacher teams plan their units vertically by content and horizontally by grade.
- Lesson plans and related instructional activities evidenced the use of multiple forms of checks for understanding which teachers record on their clipboards or in the notebooks. Teachers use these checks for understanding to determine the extent of student learning. Other techniques include: individualized conferring; exit slips; peer student checklists; rubrics specific to the tasks. Students also use self-assessment checklists on a weekly basis and provide peer feedback. Examples of adjustments observed included additional time in guided reading, the use of technology and a variety of graphic organizers.
- Teachers' conference notes indicated that many different checks for understanding are used during the instructional period. Even though they were not all evident during classroom visits, teacher and student reports spoke to red, yellow or green cups or sticks, thumbs-up/thumbs-down, and impromptu student presentations and dialogue among students when they turn and talk. Assessments are Common Core aligned and teachers meet weekly to adjust for reliability and validity as needed.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through the Danielson Framework for Teaching and some different modes of communication. Workshops and performance updates attempt to keep families apprised of student progress towards college and career readiness.

### **Impact**

Structures that support the school's high expectations are developing. These structures are intended to build buy-in and accountability among staff, students and families.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school has attempted to ensure that there is a communal entity in all grade bands. They have not yet established consistency with initiatives for all students that would promote a culture of high expectations for both elementary and middle school. Teacher teams and volunteer committees are working with the new parent coordinator to continue improvement. Student government has functioned this year in grades three through eight. School leaders are providing feedback on these issues to parents and beginning to enlist their support in college and career readiness initiatives.
- Parents shared that teachers offer guidance and support regularly and send updates on their child's progress via intermittent progress reports, regular report cards, phone and e-mail outreach.
- The school leaders engage in frequent classroom observations and provide individualized feedback to teachers using the Danielson Framework. Peer inter-visitations, professional development and informal conversations on school performance hold staff accountable for meeting expectations.