



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Edward Bleeker Junior High School**

**Middle School Q185**

**147-26 25<sup>th</sup> Drive  
Queens  
NY 11354**

**Principal: Theresa Mshar**

**Date of review: May 6, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Rajeev Bector**

## The School Context

Edward Bleeker is a middle school with 1524 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 6% Black, 26% Hispanic, 14% White, and 54% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 14% 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 96.1%.

## 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>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams systematically analyze classroom practice, assessment data, and student work, and teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### Impact

The deliberate and structured work of teacher teams has strengthened teacher instructional capacity and resulted in school-wide instructional coherence and mastery of goals for groups of students. Distributed leadership structures enable teachers to positively impact student learning across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has clearly defined standards for collaborative professional learning, and professional learning plans incorporate staff input. Teachers conduct inter-visitations and provide ongoing feedback to their colleagues on a regular basis.
- Teacher teams conducted data analysis and discovered that in math students were not performing well on the ratios and proportions unit assessments since they were being expected to master a lot of information. As a result, they modified the assessments and narrowed the curriculum to focus on ensuring a deeper understanding of a few key concepts. Similarly, English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers noticed that certain assessment questions that required knowledge of academic vocabulary were presenting a challenge to students. Therefore, they modified the next unit assessment to include vocabulary cards and to reduce the number of available choices. In addition, they explicitly taught academic vocabulary, and high-frequency domain-specific vocabulary. In both instances, groups of students demonstrated mastery of their goals, as evidenced by the assessment data.
- Teachers meet in grade level teams on a weekly basis and use a template to align instruction to the Common Core standards. They examine student data and collaborate via the use of online tools and cloud-based services such as Dropbox, Google Drive, and Padlet Pro to refine assessments, tasks, and instruction and to promote continuously improved achievement for all learners. Teachers' instructional capacity has been strengthened through the structured and strategic use of inter-visitations. Teacher teams utilize research-based protocols, such as the Focus Point Protocol, to conduct inter-visitations and offer targeted feedback to their colleagues.
- The school's professional learning committee takes a leadership role in designing collaborative professional learning experiences. Teachers often initiate and lead after-school activities, such as Bleeker Newspaper, Lego Robotics, Science Olympiad, and Storytelling with Scratch, among others. Additionally, teachers lead common planning time meetings and mentor first-year teachers, and teacher teams report being able to make independent decisions as a team on their choice of curricula and textbooks, and autonomy to modify academic tasks and assessments to improve student learning.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and assessments aligned with the curricula and use the results of common assessments to adjust curricula and instruction. Teachers' formative assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding but sometimes provide limited feedback to students.

### Impact

By monitoring student understanding and analyzing trends for groups of students, teachers are able to make instructional adjustments to meet students' learning needs, and to determine student progress toward goals. However, formative assessment practices do not yet consistently correlate to clear and meaningful feedback for students.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership indicates that teachers consistently revisit assessments to modify them or their teaching practices as needed based on student progress or the lack thereof. Teachers examine trends in student data from common assessments, and then adjust instructional tasks to support struggling students. For instance, after administering and analyzing the results of a common assessment, math teachers adjusted their instructional practices to include resources from EngageNY, and incorporated technology, such as the use of Google Drive.
- Teachers use rubrics, checklists, and track student progress on pre-defined criteria. Teachers monitor learning for groups of students by using questions, formative assessments, such as "fist to five", and encourage students to serve as instructional resources for one another through collaboration and peer-assessment. For instance, students in a grade 6 math class were constantly referred to the rule of "three before me," whereby they had to consult three of their peers before asking the teacher for help. However, in some classrooms, students did not always monitor their own learning or assess their own work against clear criteria, and teachers did not consistently make mid-course corrections when needed to adjust the lesson based on student feedback.
- On the 2013-2014 NYC School Survey, 95% of teachers reported that classroom-based checks for understanding are "very useful" or "somewhat useful," and 77% of teachers reported that the school "uses assessments that are relevant to my daily instruction." However, while teachers use rubrics to make the assessment criteria clear to students, in some classrooms the feedback to students is not always sufficiently detailed or substantive. Additionally, while in some classrooms teachers monitored student understanding using a tracker or a rubric, they did not always provide immediate and actionable feedback.

## Additional Findings

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

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core and content standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and promote college and career readiness. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills and are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

By aligning curricula to standards, emphasizing academic rigor, and refining curricula based on student outcomes, all students have access to the curricula, are cognitively engaged, and the school thereby promotes college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The Expeditionary Learning English language arts (ELA) curriculum makes cross-curricular connections with the social studies curriculum. Students read a variety of informational texts and primary source documents on World War II, thus building knowledge from text. Science curricula emphasize informational texts and expect students to “gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and paraphrase the conclusions of others by following a standard format for citation.” In addition, music, visual arts, and theatre teachers follow curriculum provided by the Blue Print for the Arts, and the school partners with Silk Road to integrate the arts into ELA and social studies classes.
- Planning documents for the ELA curriculum indicate that teachers make purposeful decisions about student learning and often reference the work of educational researchers to explain the use of instructional strategies such as jigsaw, question matrix, and guided practice.
- Curricula are color-coded, indicating changes made for the 2013-2014 school year, and changes and anticipated adjustments for the 2014-2015 school year. Math teachers examined exit slips from a dot plot exercise, and based on student responses, refined academic tasks to include checklists and guided notes. Teachers encouraged struggling students to create dot plots using stickers, and line plots on the computer and they encouraged advanced learners to make cross-curricular connections with the food chain in science by researching and creating dot plots of hunted rabbits and coyotes.
- The school has enlisted Arts Connection to support English language learners (ELLs) through animation and dance, and facilitates residencies for ELLs that incorporate the speaking and listening Common Core standards through diverse media such as videos, music, poetry, and performance. However, while curricula emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills, and a diversity of learners have access and are cognitively engaged, scaffolds and supports for ELLs and students with disabilities are not yet fully differentiated in curricular and planning documents so that all students can demonstrate their thinking. For instance, while grade 7 social studies curriculum makes use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies for ELLs, students with disabilities, and Gifted and Talented students, interventions for ELLs and students with disabilities are identical, thus hindering teachers from providing targeted support to students with different needs, such as newcomers, long-term ELLs, or students with interrupted formal education.

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations and provide training aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families, provide guidance supports and establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

### Impact

The school creates a high degree of mutual accountability for staff and students, and successfully partners with families to support student progress so that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- Students collaborate with their teachers to create instructional goals and document them in their agenda books for all major subjects for each marking period. They also articulate strategies they will use to meet their goals. A variety of guidance and advisement supports prepare students for the next level, including college and career readiness trips, college and career day, guidance days, and a transition plan for students with disabilities. Additionally, the school has made books on college and career choices available to all students.
- School leaders provide training to teachers on elements of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, including questioning and discussion, engaging students in learning, and using assessment in instruction, and on protocols such as mix and mingle, gallery walk, taking a stand and carousel. Teachers often lead the professional learning sessions. Teacher leaders facilitate the learning of their colleagues within professional learning communities focused on instruction, peer coaching, and problem solving. A year-long professional learning plan is created and revised on a bi-monthly schedule with the members of the professional development team. These team meetings include professional readings rooted in protocols, as well as data analysis.
- The school communicates with families on a regular basis and in multiple ways, such as online via PupilPath, through mailings, phone calls, and via the mobile application Remind. Families partner with the school to improve student achievement. The school conducts parent and family workshops with topics such as parenting skills, understanding curriculum and assessment expectations, literacy, and technology training to build the capacity of parents and caregivers to help their children at home. Several parents have been trained as school volunteers, assisting at open houses and orientations, and are involved in the School Leadership Team, Parent-Teacher Association, and on the Title I parent committee. Parents and families are active partners in their children's education. For instance, parents have donated books and supplies, contributed for an electronic sign for the school, chaperoned school events, donated ping-pong tables, and helped fund the school newspaper so that students could write for an authentic audience.

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

Pedagogy is aligned to the school's core beliefs about student learning and to the curricula, and is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, and students demonstrate higher order thinking skills.

### **Impact**

The alignment of pedagogy to curricula enables students to be engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and the use of effective teaching strategies allows all learners to access the curricula.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms, students worked in small groups on Common Core aligned tasks, and lessons incorporated the instructional shifts, such as citing textual evidence to support a claim, conducting close readings of grade appropriate texts, and building knowledge from text. In a grade 6 Expeditionary Learning ELA class, students gathered information from multiple texts to understand how human activity affects the natural world, answered text-dependent questions, and supported their claims with textual evidence. In a grade 7 math class, students engaged in small group discussions to determine how many square feet of grass were needed for a school park, and demonstrated their understanding in writing.
- In a grade 6 social studies class, students participated in a Socratic seminar to determine how ancient cultures benefitted from the Silk Road. Students self-selected inner and outer circle roles. Students in the outer circle used sentence starters and prompts to help keep track of the points made during the discussion by students in the inner circle. All students analyzed versions of secondary source documents aligned with their reading score, and read texts at a grade 4, grade 6, or grade 8 reading level, based on their decoding skills. In a grade 7 ELA class, students worked with a partner on a similar reading level to answer tiered questions. Struggling readers were provided hints, additional definitions, and guided questions, while advanced students conducted a short debate to determine which event in the story had the greatest impact on a character and to identify and explain the use of symbolism in the story.
- Students were able to make cross-curricular connections by connecting the concepts learned in social studies to ELA, and by articulating the similarities between the two disciplines. For instance, during the student group meeting, students were able to show how, in their argumentative essays, they connected the theme of racism in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* with the American civil rights movement, and also with the concept of karma learned in their social studies classes.