



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

I.S. The Linden

Middle School Q192

**109-89 204th Street
Queens
NY 11412**

Principal: Harriet Diaz

**Date of review: February 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon**

The School Context

Renaissance Middle School is an intermediate school with 521 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 88% Black, 8% Hispanic, 2% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English language learners and 15% 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 92.0%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	Developing
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	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, to the faculty and provide training to support teachers in meeting those expectations. School leaders and staff communicate effectively and provide feedback to inform families of student progress toward meeting the school's high expectations with a clear path towards college and career readiness.

Impact

Teachers are provided with professional development and supports to enable them to meet the expectations of school leaders. Parents are provided with information that helps them to understand their child's progress and the expectations of the Common Core Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- During the leadership meeting the principal stated that a group of teacher-leaders attended an Expeditionary Reading professional development conference in Albany, gathered curricular implementation information and turn-keyed the information to all staff when they returned. She further stated that this supported teachers in analyzing and modifying the curriculum to meet their students' needs.
- The on-site United Federation of Teachers' Teacher Center coach leads teacher team meetings, facilitates professional development meetings and collaborative planning support for teachers. The principal shared that teacher observation data illuminated a need to further develop teachers' questioning skills. In response, teachers are required to use the Depth of Knowledge framework to scaffold the level of their task based questions as well as questioning during instructional periods. In addition, the principal asserted that the school places an emphasis on the use of academic vocabulary. Teachers use the Frayer Model to scaffold student comprehension of key academic vocabulary. The assistant principal supervises math instruction and leads instructional planning and professional development in math.
- During the parent meeting, family members stated that they receive information regarding daily student progress towards meeting goals and college and career readiness through the following venues: Pupil Path, online communication platform and weekly established early-morning or afternoon meeting times. Many parents stated that they also communicate with teachers via text on an as-needed basis.
- Parents attend informational workshops focused on the Common Core Learning Standards that the staff facilitates. Parents were able to clearly articulate Common Core Standards and goals. During the parent meeting, parents stated that one of the goals of the Common Core is to level the playing field by equally preparing students throughout the country. In addition a parent asserted that Common Core math requires students to be able to "explain their answers in different ways".

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school is developing in the use of common assessments to measure student progress. However, teachers inconsistently use checks for understanding and student self-assessment during instructional periods.

Impact

As the effective use of common assessments is still being developed, teachers are limited in their ability to tailor instruction to accommodate student learning needs and making adjustments to curricula. In addition, inconsistent checks for understanding and the inconsistent use of student self-assessment limits effective instructional adjustments in some classes.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers administer the Sound Reading Solutions web-based diagnostic reading program for struggling readers. Baseline data reflecting each student's word reading accuracy, auditory discrimination skills and automatic naming skills are graphed in a "report card". During the visit, school-wide use of this data for instructional planning was not yet evident.
- Teachers administer performance-based assessments. School leaders shared that although the data is captured in Schoolnet, not all teachers are facile at accessing and analyzing the school net data, at present. An assistant principal is working to develop teachers' facility in accessing and analyzing Schoolnet data through the use of a data tracker. In a February memo to teachers the assistant principal articulated a goal for teachers to begin by documenting data for "at least five students per class on the data tracker."
- Teachers are expected to enter all benchmark data for a subject, analyze it and document on-going instructional implications. The frequency and effectiveness of teachers' checking for understanding varied across classrooms. For example, in an eighth grade English Language Arts class, after reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, groups of students engaged in a "jig-saw", a cooperative learning strategy, discussion of societal dilemmas such as discrimination, racism and prejudice. Students within the "home" group counted off and all who had like numbers regrouped to discuss one of the focal social dilemmas that emerged from the classic novel. After each group discussed their designated topic, students returned to their home groups to share information with their peers. The teacher was observed circulating amongst the groups to listen in, asking clarifying questions, pushing student thinking and recording anecdotal observations. Conversely, in a sixth grade math class the teacher taught from the front of the room solely, and did not check for understanding. Students were confused as she attempted to teach them how to convert "English statements into algebraic expressions." During the hallway debrief, the principal expressed concern regarding the teacher's lack of clarity and lack of monitoring for understanding.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the standards-aligned curricula integrate key instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions. Across grades and subjects curricula emphasize higher-order skills and rigorous habits for a variety of learners.

Impact

The consistent planning and implementation of coherent Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula emphasizes higher-order skills and rigorous habits that promotes college and career readiness for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared that for math instruction, teachers implement the Connected Math Project 3 curriculum. In order to fortify opportunities for real-world applications teachers are also integrating components of *Houghton Mifflin On-Core* math program, *People's Common Core Mathematics* program and *Engage NY*. These curricula are integrated within the units of the IS 192 – math curriculum map. Each unit also reflects the Common Core math standards, the purpose, academic vocabulary and assessments.
- In English language arts, teachers are implementing Expeditionary learning. English language arts lesson plans are documented weekly on the “192 ELA Lesson Plan Format”. Teachers begin with the essential question, then identify to learning objective, Common Core Learning Standards, and also include the instructional resources and academic vocabulary. Each day the mini-lesson and guided grouping are planned out. The plan culminates with homework and follow-up tasks.
- Throughout the grades, instructional planning reflects a focus on instructional shifts 4 – providing text-based answers, 5 – writing from sources, and 6 – the use of academic vocabulary. Within humanities classes, Common Core-aligned performance-based tasks engage students in instructional shifts 4 and 5. An emphasis on shift 6 is reflected in all lesson plans across subjects.
- The principal stated that teacher teams have modified the New York City science bundles to develop the school’s science curriculum. In social studies, unit plans and lesson plans are developed in alignment with the New York City scope and sequence. In addition social studies topics are integrated throughout the *Expeditionary Learning* curricula.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms teaching practices are becoming aligned and beginning to reflect the tenets of how students learn best as articulated in the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across classrooms teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points for all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points limiting student discussion and engagement as reflected in the lack of higher order thinking skills in student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Throughout classes, students were constantly reminded to provide evidence from the text to support their claims, conclusions and inferences. In one classroom, the teacher circulated to ensure that students were providing textual evidence as they inferred the author's purpose for writing the short story, *My Friend Arnold*. Students worked in partnerships to jot their inferences and evidence into a graphic organizer.
- Teaching strategies that provided multiple entry points were observed in several classrooms. For example some teachers used hands on manipulatives to engage students in science and math exploration; however some teachers did not utilize strategies and materials to engage students through multiple entry points. For example, in a math class a teacher instructed students to solve algebraic equations through the algorithm method and those that were observed struggling were not provided concrete or representational scaffolds.
- Although students were seated in groups in many classrooms visited, there was limited opportunity for student to student discussion in some classrooms. For example, a math teacher selected a student to draw a model of a chart representing "constant proportionality". As the student posted his work the teacher asked, "What does constant proportionality mean?" Several students raised their hands however the teacher called upon one student to respond. After the model was posted, the teacher stated the work was correct and proceeded to explain the chart. However, the chart was inaccurate and although some students raised their hands to question the work, the teacher overlooked them, affirmed the inaccurate model and proceeded to the next problem.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based teacher-team collaborations that promote school wide goals and distributed leadership structures that ensure the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Distributed leadership structures allow teachers to have a voice in key decisions across the school.

Impact

The work of teacher teams promotes the attainment of school wide goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standard as well as strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers. Distributed leadership structures include teachers in school wide decision-making with a focus on improved student learning across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- During a teacher team observation, teachers analyzed selected student literary essays in response to, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Teachers focused on students’ proficiency in citing text-based evidence to justify their claims and inferences. This focus was directly correlated to instructional shift 4 – providing text-based answers, which is one of the school’s focal shifts. In addition, it aligns with the school-wide goal of increasing accuracy in short and extended literary responses.
- During the teacher team meeting, teachers used the *Looking at Student Work Protocol* to analyze student work. In adherence to this protocol, team members identified the task, analyzed how each student demonstrated understanding of the task and planned next instructional steps for each student.
- During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared the many opportunities that leadership opportunities that they are provided. Several teachers stated that they are sent to professional development seminars outside of the school, with the expectation that they will turnkey all information upon return. There are lead teachers and a United Federation of Teachers literacy coach. In addition, one of the teachers is an administrative intern through participation in the Leaders in Education Apprenticeship Program (LEAP).