



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

The Oliver Wendell Holmes School

Middle School 204

**36-41 28th Street
Queens
NY 11106**

Principal: Yvonne Leimsider

**Date of review: December 15, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico**

The School Context

Oliver Wendell Holmes is a middle school with 579 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 18% Black, 48% Hispanic, 9% White, and 24% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	Well Developed
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	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	Additional Findings	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:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

The curriculum is Common Core aligned and strategically incorporates the instructional shifts. Academic tasks provide multiple entry points across grades and subject to support a variety of learning styles.

Impact

There is coherence and rigor across all grades and subject areas. Tiered tasks are developed to promote higher cognitive engagement and independent work to promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- The school implements *Expeditionary Learning*, Engage NY, Magnet Units and *Pearson's Connected Mathematics Project 3 (CMP3)* as a starting point for Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) aligned instruction. Unit plans and lessons are supplemented and refined to meet students learning needs. The school adopted the Tiered Task protocol to ensure that all daily lesson plans have multiple entry points. Depth of Knowledge (DOK) is used to create essential questions and to foster rigor within the units of study. Sample tasks ask students to examine their premise, build logical arguments and critique the arguments of others.
- The social studies unit *Road to Revolution* covers Common Core Learning Standards including citing specific textual evidence to support the analysis of primary and secondary sources. In the unit students are required to read through primary documents and use the "think about it" questions to discuss the documents with table members. The unit integrates visual information and content vocabulary development. All units and daily lessons also include an extension activity. For example, in the math unit *Save it with Symbols*, the lessons contain Equations Expert word problems with high level questions.
- A variety of scaffolds and tools are used to refine academic tasks to ensure all students have access to the curricular. Lessons include "helpful hints" such as use the "show transcript" tool to see the full text of the document, use the graphic organizer to record evidence, scroll over words in green to better understand complex vocabulary, refer to definitions below to increase your understanding.
- This year every unit incorporates project based learning with real world experiences. Curriculum units build knowledge through content rich nonfiction and informational texts. English language arts unit includes a newspaper project using the novel *A Long Walk to Water*. There are also interdisciplinary units and different course offerings including robotics.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Although the school utilizes uniform assessments in each department to measure student learning across the grades, the adjustments made to curriculum and instruction hasn't fully resulted in increased mastery for all learners.

Impact

Assessment data is used to make refinements and adjustments to curriculum to meet students learning needs; however, not all students are aware of their next learning steps

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers access a wide range of student assessment information and use it measuring student learning and progress toward unit goals. Assessments include NYC benchmark Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) Performance tasks and unit tests in English Language Arts, Social Studies and Science. Teachers also collect low inference data using observations, checklists and Class Dojo a computerized assessment program. The staff creates a common core aligned test summary analysis which provides students with areas of strength, weakness and next steps. Exit slips and entry tasks assist teachers in planning next steps, grouping students and adjusting future lessons.
- Teachers check for understanding and students are encouraged to self-assess using student goal sheets, holistic state rubrics, fist to five protocols, and test summary analysis sheets. Teacher's conference with individual students using the specific criteria to help set learning goals and next steps in writing. This helps students understanding of their progress against the grade level standard. In the 6th grade ELA writing lesson student were asked to choose one of their completed body paragraphs and grade themselves according to the persuasive writing rubric provided. Students then discussed their self-evaluation with their group and gave each other feedback.
- All lesson plans include learning targets that are written as "I can" statements. These are used as an assessment of students' progress toward meeting the unit learning goal. For example, in the ELA classroom Students self-assessed using I can statements in Module 2 Unit 2 Lessons7: "I can analyze what characters' dialogue about Atticus reveals about his character" and "I can support my inferences about Chapter 22 and 23 of To Kill a Mockingbird with the strongest evidence from the text". During the group discussions, students used these "I Can" statements to evaluate their responses to the questions on analyzing characters.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Across the majority of classrooms instruction is CCLS aligned, teaching practices are based on a common set of beliefs about how students learn and lesson planning utilizes the Danielson Framework for Teaching to a high degree

Impact

Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills through student led discussions and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Small group activities are differentiated with multiple entry points, specifically for students who are struggling and those that require enhancements. Teachers use assessment data to purposely group students to provide accurate and specific feedback and support. Tiering the tasks and using academic vocabulary in all subject areas further supports students' growth. All lesson plans include scaffolds and multiple entry points to ensure all students are successful. Students have graphic organizers, templates and other tools to support their learning. They also use a technology tool called *Zoom IN* for teaching literacy in the social studies. Students build reading and writing skills that are specific in the study of history. This program was evidenced in the 7th grade history class. Students used their laptop computers to log in to *Zoom IN* account to review images of propaganda and context document on the "Bloody Massacre" lesson in the Road to Revolution Unit. Students discussed what the message was in each image and what they were trying to accomplish and were provided with digital tools to support their reading and writing.
- Higher level thinking skills are evidenced throughout the classroom visits. Teachers promote peer discussion through a variety of methodologies including turn & talk, paired activity, think/pair/share as well as a whole group. Teachers challenge students to support their argument in discussion and in writing with evidence from the text and logical reasoning. During the 8th grade ELA lesson on *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the teacher asked the students to engage in a protocol called "written conversation". Independently, on a post it note, each student shared their response about what their chosen persons' reactions revealed about the character, and cited text evidence to support their response. The students were assigned a group and discussed the ways that the characters reacted in the aftermath of the guilty verdict of Tom Robinson. The teacher asked guided questions including "What does Atticus's reaction to the generosity of the black community reveal about him? Why does Atticus ignore Bob Ewells entire outburst?" Students recorded and shared strongest pieces of evidence to support their claims.
- Teachers plan and focus on effective questioning skills and provide a foundation for productive discussions in lessons to engender critical thinking in students. Teachers use a project based approach from the school's magnet units and pose open-ended questions to promote critical thinking & deeper discussion. Students are allowed some level of choice in discussion and work time. The 8th grade earth science regents' class asked students to make visual and written observations of nine minerals as they looked for distinguishing properties. The teacher effectively used the smart board to model and present information and posed higher level thinking questions to the group. English language learners are provided with word banks, writing prompts and pictures for vocabulary development.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

Instructional leaders, teacher teams and staff have established a culture for learning that systemically communicates high expectations, providing continuous support for the entire school community to achieve expectations.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability and students receive clear and focused feedback with appropriate supports to ensure student success at the college and career level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has a coherent Grade 6-8 continuum for learning in each subject area. School leaders have established a clear benchmark for student achievement by the end of each grade that is communicated to the entire school community. Letters are sent home to parents with the class expectations.
- Teachers support and monitor short term goal setting. All students are expected to work towards achieving the grade level standard and this is communicated to parents so that they can support their child. The use of *Engrade and Class Dojo* allows parents to monitor their child's progress. In addition, parents are required to sign assessment summary sheets. Weekly Parent Workshops provide opportunity for greater parental engagement with the school. Open Houses give parents & teachers opportunities to enter into supportive discussions to promote student progress toward meeting their goals. The guidance counselor meetings facilitate support for HS admissions;
- Student of the Month and Award ceremonies recognize student achievement and progress. The Princeton and Harvard Academy are unique in targeting student's interests and strengths but provide the same expectations to all students. The school holds high school fairs and provides guidance in school selection. Student council empowers student voice. The students are demonstrating independence through self-assessment and self-monitoring established goals. They construct effective arguments, ask relevant questions and use research skills to taking in-depth looks into historical documents.
- Students shared their work and articulated their strengths and areas for improvement. They knew what they needed to do to improve and showed evidence of work they resubmitted after receiving teacher and peer feedback. The majority of students said the work was challenging but that teachers explain and give them tools to help them be successful. Students shared their portfolios in various content areas and discussed projects they had completed.

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

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are involved in teacher teams that collaboratively analyze classroom practice, assessment data, student work and curricular products for the purpose of making thoughtful adjustments to increase common core alignment.

Impact

Teams have a clear instructional focus that promotes the implementation of the instructional shifts and results in shared improvements of teacher practice and increased student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly and collaborate to plan and refine upcoming units and lessons to ensure Common Core Standards alignment. Teachers review student assessment information to improve outcomes. They review, modify and adjust curriculum in its second year of implementation to ensure that it meets the needs of their diverse learners. The 7th grade team reviewed student writing samples and concluded that students needed additional support in identifying a counter claim. They decided to reteach the lesson and sentence starters with evidence and explanations. The math team developed three different color worksheets which includes an exploration. The team also identified various solution pathways and anticipated challenges to plan questions that both check and deepen students' understanding of challenging instructional tasks. The students deepened their fluency, application and conceptual understanding
- Teacher Teams are provided with focused professional development to assist them in analyzing various forms of data to allow for lesson planning, monitoring of student learning and to offer feedback on the use of protocols. Teachers participate in lesson plan studies to ensure the implementation of instructional expectations and to study data to support tiered instruction for meeting the varied student learning needs. Teachers also analyze student work samples to determine the effectiveness of the work completed during the Lesson Plan Study.
- Administrators select and assign lead teachers in each department to visit classrooms, provide mentorship, and actionable feedback; Inter-visitation is currently being implemented between colleagues and is based on the observation feedback. The schools' instructional cabinet which consists of the principal, three assistant principals and four lead teachers meet weekly as an inquiry team to strategize and analyze school data. Analysis of the Advance data from 2013-2014 revealed that 35% of the teachers needed improvement in questioning and discussion techniques. As a result, professional development was provided and administrators focused on domain 3b to ensure meaningful feedback was given to improve practice.