



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Hunter's Point Community

Middle School Q291

**1-50 51st Avenue
Queens
NY 11101**

Principal: Sarah Goodman

Date of review: March 27, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Lucia Perez-Medina

The School Context

Hunter's Point Community Middle School is a middle school with 232 students from grades 6 through grade 7. The school population comprises 15% Black, 49% Hispanic, 17% White, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 94.0%.

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	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	Proficient
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	Celebration	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	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations of the Danielson's Framework for Teaching to staff and successfully partners with families to communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness.

Impact

These structures have resulted in a culture of mutual accountability among all stakeholders and increased student progress towards expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership team discusses needs assessments with parents and Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) action plans are revised based on their input. Parents stated during the parent meeting that the school involves them in many activities and asks them for their input. Families are engaged in learning walks on topics geared towards college and career readiness skills. After a presentation, parents visit classrooms with a checklist to get a sense of these skills in action and how they relate to the CEP goals. The school then gathers parent feedback and shares it with SLT and staff.
- The school has a well-designed website to communicate with staff, students and families where school calendars, curriculum maps, homework and projects, newsletters and more are posted. The parent coordinator, administration and grade teams send monthly updates to parents.
- During the parent interview, parents expressed that the School Leadership Team conducted a parent survey to determine what topics they were interested in. Workshops have supported parent requests. In addition, one parent stated, "We wanted an art teacher and a language teacher and now we have them." Parents also stated that during the student-led conferences in November they received a thorough progress report in addition to having access to view their child's grades anytime through an online system called *JumpRope*. Progress reports are sent home 3x a year.
- School leaders communicate high expectations through professional learning sessions, newsletters, emails, curricular planning meetings and individual sessions with teachers. In addition, teachers stated that during common planning sessions and team meetings, they constantly engage in professional dialogue and share practices that contribute to their success in the classroom. Teachers shared that school leaders support their development through frequent professional learning focused on high expectations for all students through modeling, inter-visitation, and ongoing written and verbal feedback, allowing them to meet the school's rigorous set of expectations for teaching and learning. For example, one teacher team articulated how school leaders collaboratively participate in the development of unit plans and model specific teaching strategies that highlight the overarching goals of the unit.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Assessment practices are aligned with the school's curricula, are used to determine student progress toward goals, and incorporate use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Assessment data results are used to adjust curricula and instruction; however, students are not always provided with meaningful feedback so that they can demonstrate increased mastery and are aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classrooms visited, formative assessment practices were strategically embedded in daily lessons via questioning, sharing of ideas from group or partner work and exit slips providing for immediate feedback on student mastery of content and skills related to learning goals.
- Teachers plan based on analyses of student work and on information they have on individual students. Across most classrooms visited, teachers were conducting check-ins, giving targeted feedback to some students and provided some opportunities for students to self-assess their work.
- Most students shared how they used the rubrics attached to their writing pieces as feedback regarding what they did well and how they could improve their work. One student stated, "I need to use more transitional words and clear language in my writing." Another student added, "Rubrics help us understand what we need to do to improve our work." Three students pointed out that their rubrics highlight the indicators mastered and next steps in humanities. Yet two other students could not articulate their next learning steps in mathematics. One student stated that his teacher gave him feedback through Google-docs, a document sharing service. However, a review of student work revealed limited actionable and meaningful feedback across some subject areas, particularly science and mathematics.
- The school uses *JumpRope*, an online grading system where teachers regularly upload students' formative and summative data and other relevant information including student profiles. This data is tracked regularly by administrators and teachers to monitor student progress toward grade level goals. In addition, students have access to review their performance across the year across all subject areas for every marking period.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Across grades and subjects, school leaders and teachers reflectively and strategically align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts and emphasize higher-order thinking skills embedded in academic tasks and curricula for all learners.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build instructional coherence across grades and content areas so that all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Using Google drive, teams collaboratively refine curriculum maps and units of study, ensuring coherence of curricula and deep alignment to the Common Core State Standards across grades and content areas. The school designs their curricula by planning backwards using a detailed instructional model incorporating three core values: scholarship, creativity and community with the goal to incorporate these values in various fields so that students can be engaged in authentic, intellectually rigorous work that requires them to think deeply and use higher order thinking skills. A review of unit plans show consistency of planning using the Instructional Expectations model document.
- Unit maps, lesson plans and student work viewed show academic tasks that are threaded through themes linked to complex texts that immerse students in intellectually demanding learning activities. For example, across subjects students are required to complete tasks such as evidence-based position papers that involve making a claim, analyzing and supporting the claim, and presenting their work to teachers and peers. Additionally, across content areas, there are projects requiring students to delve deeply into academic vocabulary in producing informational essays or describing problem-solving steps. For example, in one grade 6 unit "Home" students are required to construct a self-contained eco-system where there are two distinct layers: one terrestrial and one aquatic and then research and write a flash essay incorporating text-based evidence to support an analysis of texts on how both natural and anthropomorphic disasters can affect ecosystems.
- *Expeditionary Learning* for English language arts and Pearson's *Connected Mathematics Project 3* (CMP3) for math are utilized and aligned to the Common Core. Other content areas use New York State (NYS) scope and sequence to provide a framework to enhance units of study so they are demanding and rigorous. Science teachers are also using the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), Full Options Science Systems (FOSS), trade books, and videos to incorporate science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) standards in an integrated approach. In addition, the school has created theme-based units of study to supplement the science curriculum with project-based learning opportunities. Themes studied like water ecology has supplemented the science curriculum and the humanities curriculum is supplemented with Word Generation to further support vocabulary development and debating skills. The strategic debating skills taught with the Word Generation supplemental curriculum has resulted in students winning top speaker and team awards in the NYC Urban Debate League (NYCUDL), NYCUDL Battle of the Boroughs Debate Tournament, and MSQI (Middle School Quality Initiative) city wide competitions.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, and are informed by the Danielson's Framework for Teaching. Curricula and academic tasks emphasize higher order skills for a diversity of learners.

Impact

Curricula provide curricula access for a variety of learners and opportunities for most learners to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, and engage in discussions to deepen student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Within each subject area and across grade levels, lessons offered some opportunities through focus questions provided by teachers for students in flexible groupings to learn and practice newly learned concepts and skills with peers and individually. For example, groups of students in a grade 6 humanities class collaborated with peers in other groups to analyze specific aspects of life in Ancient Egypt, and gather enough evidence to support a claim to draft their persuasive essays. There were a range of texts, graphic organizers and other resources available to support a variety of learners.
- In four classrooms visited, students participated in class discussions. In two classes, students evaluated evidence in an article for their argumentative essay and discussed their positions with their peers. During one lesson, the teacher showed students a model essay and asked them to create a convincing argument about why they believe their chosen branch is the most powerful branch in our government. Most students participated and responded in groups or to their partner. In another lesson, students had to evaluate evidence in an article for their argumentative essay and students had the opportunity to discuss their positions with their peers.
- During a math lesson in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, all students had the opportunity to choose and rotate between stations and were expected to develop probability models. All students completed two stations. The students were given the opportunity to engage in a discussion with their partners or within their groups. Some groups of students, including students with disabilities, struggled with the task, but had access to calculators, support from a facilitator in the group, and additional strategies to support their learning.
- During a 6th grade lesson, students were engaged in groups debating the topic, "Should Intelligent Design be taught in schools?" Students worked in groups of four and each had a different role, such as mediator, evaluator and debater. Students were expected to debate and incorporate provided academic vocabulary words like creationism, evolve and perspective as much as possible. Students had the opportunity to engage in a rich discussion and build upon each other's ideas using evidence from the text.

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

Teacher teams are engaged in professional collaborations and regularly analyze student work and benefit from a variety of opportunities to research and decide on effective instructional techniques.

Impact

Teacher teams have strengthen instructional coherence across grades. Professional collaboration around student work and instructional strategies results in improved teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly and have developed structures including use of a protocol, team notes, and supplemental materials to support student progress. The focus of these meetings encompasses an integration of the school goals around using student data from varied assessments (such as benchmark baselines, quick writes and published pieces aligned to a school wide writing rubric) to determine student strengths and learning needs as well as to guide the development of strategies to support active engagement and academic achievement. Additionally, feedback from the administration is provided to teacher teams to improve the quality of the instructional work and inform future meetings.
- During a grade 6 team meeting, the humanities teachers used a *Noticing's, Wonderings and Next Steps* student work protocol to determine next steps for teaching practices. Team members analyzed writing drafts to determine students' understanding of using quotes to support a claim and the elaboration of ideas. One teacher determined that although her students had improved in their understanding of a claim, there were some students who were still having difficulty with finding the best evidence to support a claim. As a next step, teachers decided to re-teach the concepts by expanding on the importance of explanations and reinforce the Teaching Excellence in Adult Learning (TEAL) strategy to support student's organization of ideas. The team decided to try these strategies with their students and bring their results to the next team meeting for review.
- Grade leaders participate in the instructional cabinet and facilitate the work with vertical and horizontal grade teams. This practice has resulted in a coherent curriculum across grades and content areas. For example, on Monday afternoons, school-wide Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are led by department heads. These department heads and mentor teachers facilitate meetings to ensure coherency using the Instructional Planning Expectations model and incorporating writing across the content areas using on demand flash writing tasks across all subject areas.