



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Hawtree Creek**

**Middle School Q297**

**121-10 Rockaway Boulevard  
Queens  
NY 11420**

**Principal: Maureen Hussey**

**Date of review: April 28, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Jean McKeon**

## The School Context

Hawtree Creek Middle School is a middle school with 255 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 51% Black, 20% Hispanic, 2% White, and 21% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 22% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 94.5%.

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

## Area of Celebration

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

The principal consistently emphasizes a culture of learning that communicates high expectations to all and provides training. School leader and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and successfully partner with parents.

### Impact

A culture of mutual accountability ensures that the entire staff is responsible for high expectations for teaching and learning and provides collegial support to one another. Through the home-school connection, faculty and families work collaboratively to support student achievement.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal consistently communicates her high expectations for student achievement to all stakeholders. She has established numerous protocols and rubrics detailing her expectations. The school has developed instructional non-negotiables for the school year and the principal expects these non-negotiables to be evident in student work. They include: implementation of the workshop model; Cornell note taking; levels of questioning/inquiry; student conferencing. The principal publishes weekly reminders containing a variety of instructional and operational topics to keep faculty abreast of expectations. Teachers receive a structured rubric containing detailed expectations for bulletin boards. Students receive a binder and Cornell notes rubrics which identify expectations for organizational structures, writing a summary, and student self-reflection.
- The principal meets informally every week with each teacher. The teachers shared that they value this time with the school leader and know they can discuss individual students, struggles with instructional techniques, and share their successes. The school leader's open door policy was evident throughout this visit. Students and parents acknowledge this practice and appreciate the principal's openness and willingness to support children.
- The 2014 School Survey shows that teachers' and parents' satisfaction rating is over 94% for each category including the Instructional Core, Systems for Improvement, and School Culture. Participation in the school survey for parents, students and teachers far exceeds the New York City and district averages. Parents stated that communications and expectations are evident as soon as their children are accepted to the school. Incoming sixth graders and their parents are invited to an orientation in June. Families meet in the auditorium and are welcomed by students who lead the evening orientation for the incoming class. The incoming sixth graders also attend an orientation in August when they follow a daily schedule, receive agendas and academic expectations in a binder.
- Parents are active partners in their child's academic success and the school maintains several lines of communication. Parents agreed how proud they are of how their children presented during the student-led conference in December and look forward to the next round in June. One parent shared how she was surprised that her child could break down and explain his learning. Parents also stated that everyone knows that the children are college-bound and know the path needed to get there. Parents know to ask their children about grouping and also know that rubrics explain what students need to do to get a level 4. Parents are invited to class visitation days when each content area hosts a day for parents to visit classrooms, sit alongside them, and take an active role in lessons.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Teacher practice is centered on an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best and is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching and meets the needs of most learners so that students produce meaningful work products.

### Impact

The school's belief system for student learning results in student work and discussion that reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- The Danielson Framework, specifically effective lesson planning, discussion and questioning, and professionalism, are evident in teacher practice and planning. The school leader stated that these three components prioritize what the school values for effective instruction and supports student learning. In turn, teachers plan lessons that specify multiple entry points through identified mixed ability or readiness groupings. In a social studies class, students used colored, scaffolded graphic organizers to record the debate flow and reflection. This supported the school-wide practice to identify ability levels through color-coded levels: red with the most details, yellow with some supports, and green with the least. Also, in a science class, there was teacher prepared, color-coded record sheets to support a variety of learners. Lesson plans also incorporate scaffolded graphic organizers, guiding questions, and tasks for specific groups and extensions to challenge students. Student work displayed a variety of graphic organizers to support their writing.
- In most classrooms visited, student discussion and participation in collaborative activities were observed. In one math class, students worked with their "elbow partner" to determine distance between plots without using a coordinate plane. Elbow partnership discussion included "I agree with S2, what he is saying is . . ." In another class, students used the discussion technique "back-to-back, face-to-face". Using their knowledge about density, students discussed where identified objects would land in water. Students conferred and recorded their partnership response on post-it notes. However, discussion in some classrooms missed opportunities for high levels of student thinking and participation. In one classroom observed, students worked in small groups on a writing activity. Some groups observed shared limited conversations and their work products showed varying levels of understanding and completion. Student engagement and opportunities for deeper thinking were hindered.
- Instructional non-negotiables, requiring consistent implementation of Cornell note taking, levels of questioning/inquiry, and student conferencing, coupled with the workshop model provide a level of consistency across classrooms. The expectation is for teachers to provide supports leading to a gradual release of responsibility so that at the end of each lesson, all students meet the learning target. Students know the expectations when they enter classrooms; they open binders, record essential questions and learning target, and then begin the brain starter. These routines were observed and are evident in many classes. However, in one math classroom, the teacher led the students through a discussion posing the questions and accepting one or two student responses without discussion.

## Additional Findings

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

The principal and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Curricular coherence and access across grades and subject areas promote college and career readiness for all learners and cognitively engage individuals and groups of students, including students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school offers comprehensive Common Core aligned curricula in all subject areas that promote college and career readiness. Through the implementation of EngageNY for math, Expeditionary Learning for English language arts, and the social studies and science Common Core Learning Standards, each department utilizes daily common planning and department team meetings to refine curriculum maps and plan daily lessons that promote higher order thinking skills. Through the use of Costa's Levels of Questioning, the school's focus on student discourse, and the implementation of scaffolded instruction, teachers ensure that learning activities provide students with numerous opportunities to demonstrate their thinking through discussion and writing. Through collaborative planning across grade levels and departments, all students have access to Common Core aligned units of study.
- Teacher teams create unit syllabi in English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies and distribute to the school community on a regular basis. The syllabi include a unit breakdown, assessments, learning targets, and resources.
- The instructional shifts are strategically included in the curriculum. Each curriculum map delineates the standards, essential questions, and specific skills to be emphasized which is coupled with a unit planning chart. All subject area teachers are required to include reading and writing in their planning and instruction. A social studies map includes specific academic vocabulary and emphasizes integration and evaluation of multiple sources of evidence. The majority of students have developed automaticity in citing text-based evidence in all content areas. Evidence of content writing in health and art include rich vocabulary and the use of the Cornell note taking protocol.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use data and student work samples, track progress, and engage in ongoing checks for understanding to create a clear picture of student progress and make effective curricular and instructional decisions.

### Impact

Teacher teams use assessments, daily checks for understanding, as well as student self and peer assessments to ascertain student progress, plan for targeted adjustments, and ensure that students are aware of next learning steps needed to progress towards mastery of learning targets.

### Supporting Evidence

- Each department utilizes a cycle of assessment incorporated into each unit of study. The principal established the school-wide assessment calendar for each subject area and grade, identified by unit topics, with dates for pre-, mid-, and end- of unit assessments. This cycle of assessment identifies student understanding at the beginning of each unit of study and which topics require additional emphasis. Teachers stated that the mid-unit assessment gauges student progress towards the final task. The culminating assessments determine student mastery. The principal and teacher teams meet to analyze this data to identify student strength and areas for remediation. Teachers use this data to plan 'do now' questions, re-teach topics, and provide academic intervention supports. School-wide data summarizes student results through the cycle of assessments. English language arts (ELA) data, disaggregated by class, tracks pre-, mid- and final assessment scores with percentage of growth for each student. For example, grade 7 ELA data details overall performance with student's growth on four identified literacy traits. Social studies assessment data mirrors those comparisons done in ELA and tracks progress by subgroup indicators including bottom 1/3 and students with disabilities. The school leader also maintains subject-specific data comparing class performance and growth through the assessment cycle. Teacher teams utilize this data and student work to refine curriculum and lesson plans to meet student needs.
- Formative assessments and ongoing check for understanding are evident in daily instruction. Teachers shared that ongoing checks give them student information to adjust their teaching to better meet student's learning needs. Lesson plans include mid- and end- check points to gauge student comprehension. In two math classes, teachers used Plickers to immediately assess student understanding. Exit slips were evident in an ELA class where a teacher collected student's counterclaims recorded on index cards. In a math class, exit slips consisted of a prepared probability problem.
- Students self-assess through peer discussions, written responses to guided questions, and on rubrics where they reflect and provide their own feedback and next steps. English language arts writing displayed student reflection on next steps towards mastery. Students are required to assess their progress throughout the semester in each subject area by hosting a student-led conference for their parents in December and June. Students present specific work from each academic content area to demonstrate mastery of a selected learning target. Evidence of student-led conference notes complete with participants' thinking and explanation of evidence was available. Students shared that they value this practice and appreciate their teachers and parents feedback during these conference. The principal stated that student-led conferences are in addition to the regular parent-teacher conference since families still requested the formal conference.

<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 collaboration that strengthen teacher instructional capacity and promote the achievement of the school's goals and the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze classroom practice, assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

### Impact

Structured professional collaborations result in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Teacher team work results in shared improvements in practice and mastery of goals for individual and groups of students.

### Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate on teacher teams devoted to inquiry and the analysis of data that lead to refinements to curricula and improvements in instructional practice. Teachers of the same content and grade-level meet at least two times per week during common planning. During this time, teachers refine curricula to ensure it is rigorous and standards-based. Content teams devote time to the horizontal and vertical alignment of content. Social studies, English language arts, science, math and special education teams meet once per week during the school day and twice a month during Monday professional learning time. During this time, teachers focus on analyzing student work, tracking student data patterns, revising current curricula, and reflecting on instructional practices. Sixth and seventh grade teams meet together regularly to calibrate instructional practices, seek interdisciplinary learning opportunities, and ensure consistency in classroom procedures.
- The math team observed planned their first cycle of instructional rounds. Using guidance from the English language arts team, the team's goal was to create a lesson for the instructional rounds based on an identified problem of practice. The math team reviewed the minutes from the prior meeting when they reviewed a professional article on instructional rounds and drafted topics for a problem of practice. During this meeting, teachers crafted the learning target, creating a visual representation to determine change in elevation, which bridged the standards of the three grades involved in the rounds. Then the team developed guiding questions for the lesson. The next steps for this team are to generate a schedule for the observation rounds and create a graphic organizer for the observing teachers to use.
- The school community created a professional and collegial culture among staff through teaming, peer-observations, and instructional rounds. Teachers analyze practice, rely on each other for professional guidance and feedback, and engage in high level conversation around teaching and learning. Through a detailed observation cycle schedule, teams follow explicit protocols to observe and provide feedback to their peers. They are currently in cycle 3 and each is aligned to a Danielson component. The host teacher provides lesson plans and observers complete a graphic organizer that include examples and evidence. The group meets for a post-observation debrief and share feedback on guiding questions. Teachers willingly accept their peers and principal into their classrooms and are eager to implement the meaningful feedback. One teacher shared that he was working on ways to include more student discussion and his peers offered several strategies which he now incorporates in his teaching. Another teacher stated that the peer observations experience is professional and positive and supportive.