



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**Edwin Markham**

**Middle School R051**

**20 Houston Street  
Staten Island  
NY 10302**

**Principal: Nicholas Mele**

**Date of review: February 3, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Anthony R. Lodico**

## The School Context

Edwin Markham is a middle school with 1,245 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 22% Black, 46% Hispanic, 25% White, and 6% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.7%.

## 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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>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>Proficient</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 focused, inquiry-based collaborations which have strengthened instructional capacity and allow for the development of teacher leadership and collaborative decision making.

### Impact

Strong, inquiry-based professional collaborations across grades and subjects enable teachers to effectively assume leadership roles which result in school-wide instructional coherence positively affecting student achievement across the school.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders meet with the Instructional Team to look at data to determine further refinement of curricula in order to align to the Common Core Learning Standards. The Instructional Team members are key lead teachers that are afforded the opportunity to facilitate meetings with their grade-level teams during common planning. The interdisciplinary grade-level teams review the curriculum and make strategic decisions. For example, teachers expressed that common assessments aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards across disciplines was a focus. Teachers worked collaboratively across grades to develop assessments with examples being students' self-assessment and exit slips, which were used for all learners.
- The Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) has provided teachers with additional professional development and support. Teacher leaders participate in professional development provided by a coach. These teacher leaders turn-key the new learning to their teacher teams that they support. Teacher teams meet on Mondays and Tuesdays and participate in a variety of professional development opportunities. Teacher leaders collaborate in this school-wide enterprise. For example, Word Generation from the MSQI was a series of workshops that teachers participated in across the school. Then, the training was turn-keyed and monitored by lead teachers. Teachers shared that the students are using vocabulary more effectively as evidenced by the student writing analyzed during inquiry meetings.
- The Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) is comprised of three peer instructional coaches and demonstration teachers. These teachers participate in inter-visitations, provide feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework and look at student data. These teachers lead professional development sessions and open their classrooms to their colleagues. For example, as a TIF school, it was decided that an area of focus this year was productive struggle as an instructional tool for teachers. The inter-visitation schedule provided allowed teachers to take the lead on their own to view lessons, discuss the student outcomes and make curriculum changes.

## Area of Focus

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

Across classes, teaching strategies include scaffolds yet entry points are inconsistent. Levels of student work products and discussions are uneven.

### Impact

Missed opportunities to fully challenge and engage all learners result in inconsistent participation and uneven levels of thinking in tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, some teachers employed strategies to increase rigor in work products and enhance the engagement of all learners. For example, in a sixth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) math classroom, the teachers purposefully grouped students based on formative assessment data. Students were able to verbalize and explain their thinking while implementing the task of dividing fractions with whole numbers and other fractions. The implementation of parallel teaching strategies and the Keep, Change, Flip (KCF) model enabled teachers to circulate, shift strategies and group select students. However, in other classrooms, instruction was primarily teacher directed. For example, in a sixth grade ICT English language arts (ELA) class, the teacher modeled a body paragraph and students were limited in time to engage in their own writing and participate in tasks to challenge their thinking.
- Student-to-student interactions were limited in some classrooms and students were not expected to make real life connections or to engage in rigorous tasks that pushed their thinking. For example, in a sixth grade science activity, students engaged in a task to build a lever with a ruler and pencil. They worked independently, followed the steps and answered questions on the worksheet. There was no opportunity for students to connect real life examples of when a lever would be used in relation to movement, weight, and force or evidence of skills applicable to Depth of Knowledge (DoK) levels 3 or 4.
- Teaching strategies and task development were aligned to the instructional shifts. For example, in a dual language ELA classroom, students were finding text evidence to support their writing about characters from a text they were reading. Scaffolds were available to students who needed additional support. Students were given a variety of graphic organizers like writing outlines and webs to assist in their writing.

## Additional Findings

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

The school community utilizes curricula that integrate the instructional shifts aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and ensures refinement of academic tasks using student work.

### Impact

The school's curricular decisions promote college and career readiness and foster cognitive engagement for all learners.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted the MSQI model in ELA. A review of academic tasks reveal scheduled time for daily reading periods for a minimum of three times a week and list targeted instructional shifts, learning objectives and skills such as fluency, comprehension and vocabulary for at risk students. For example, in a seventh grade math lesson plan, target words from the Word Generation program were listed. These words were: emerge, exploit, furthermore, confront and interfere. The learning target in the lesson plan was, "I can find a unit rate."
- School leaders have adopted the new social studies curriculum. The curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams meet to align the curriculum to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate supports in ELA. The crosswalk of skills associated with ELA is being highlighted and refined using data and work products to meet the needs of all students. The teachers stated they are working collaboratively to create lessons that meet the targeted needs of students in ELA and social studies while presenting the following: content-level material, thinking skills, research and writing skills, interpersonal and group relation skills, sequencing and chronology skills, map and globe skills, graph and image analysis skills.
- The school is in its second year of using the Connected Mathematics Program 3 (CMP3) curriculum across grades. Reflecting on its implementation and rigor from the first year, the school has made curriculum decisions to revise the curriculum to align with the Common Core Learning Standards and meet the needs of their student population. For example, upon looking at student work and data, it was found that students lacked foundational basic skills in math. A decision to incorporate instructional daily 'do now' questions that focus on target skills needed to grasp the new concept, was added to daily lesson plans.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

The school uses rubrics and assessments in all subject areas aligned to the curricula, and consistently implements checks for understanding and self-assessment practices.

### **Impact**

Actionable, clear feedback and effective adjustments leads to meeting student learning needs in each grade.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders share that a focus this year was for teachers to plan and create learning targets for students with formative assessments built-in to each lesson. These curricula learning targets are in the form of “I can” statements aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Each learning target has an assessment component for the teacher to determine student understanding during the lesson. The learning target has a student self-assessment portion where they self-reflect on their own understanding of new knowledge.
- Through conferring with students, teachers are creating targeted, pre-planned small groups. In these small groups, teachers are working with students using rubrics to meet the needs of the students and discuss actionable next steps. Teachers are taking conference notes and sharing their findings with colleagues on these targeted students. For example, an eighth grade student shared a personal goal in math and stated after meeting this initial goal, a new achievable goal was set.
- A review of student work folders and conference notes indicated that teachers provide feedback to students consistently across classes. The feedback noted was provided verbally and in writing. A review of the work folders and bulletin boards demonstrated that students use rubrics and teachers give written comments. During an interview, students provided input as to how teachers give feedback to them. One student shared, “she told me to write specifically to make my thesis statement stronger.” This comment was in reference to the teacher feedback he received to improve his social studies informative essay from a level three to a level four. Another student stated that when engaging in a writing task in his math class, the teacher gave explicit feedback on how to improve his written math responses. For example, the student shared that his teacher wants to see stronger vocabulary words and the use of math content words in his writing. Other students provided similar responses.

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

School leaders consistently convey and provide training to faculty on high expectations and best teaching practices. School leaders and staff consistently communicate feedback to families focused on the advancement of their child's learning.

### Impact

School-wide systems of accountability, professional learning and ongoing feedback to families are resulting in staff commitment towards improving teaching and learning, and student progress towards high expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school communicates their expectations using a variety of structures such as Tuesday Parent Initiative and PupilPath. Parents reported that both of these initiatives allow them the chance to either speak to school personnel or track their own child's daily progress over the Internet. Parents stated they are able to see their child's attendance, grades and completed homework. If the parent would like to seek out school staff for guidance, questions or other concerns, they can do so during the Tuesday Parent Initiative. Staff members reported they are able to utilize a variety of approaches to ensure that parents connect the expectations for learning and make home-school connections. For example, a parent stated that they were able to contact their child's teacher or the single point supervisor for their grade through e-mail. Having a single point of contact was helpful in navigating the resources to help her child.
- A Professional Development (PD) Plan was created collaboratively with the PD Team. The plan is an outgrowth of teacher needs, administration's observations and administrative mandated workshops to provide trainings on the school's expectations. The plan includes dates, a description of the PD workshops and a rationale-connection to the school's goals. The document is revised and reviewed throughout the year to meet the needs of the adult learners. The plan allows for a variety of learning opportunities. For example, one of the school's expectations is that all staff members use Skedula, an online grading tool, to post grades and assignments regularly. The PD plan reflects department meetings for all content area staff on the topic of Skedula and its usage.
- School leaders, cabinet and staff members reviewed and collected data, informally and formally observed students and teachers, and revisited previous Quality Review areas for improvement to create four major goals. These goals are: Students will become accountable for their own learning and be able to articulate classroom academic goals and personal academic goals; Teachers create student-centered learning experiences that are appropriately rigorous; Seventh grade students connect with at least one adult in the building and are provided with social, emotional and academic support, and literacy instruction will be supported by all disciplines and students will show improvement in reading and literacy. A document was created and given to all stakeholders. The document outlines the short term goals, faculty and leadership learning targets, structures and actions and the evidence for impact that is expected to be seen. The evidence has baseline, mid-year and end of year data collecting points. A review of school data and observation feedback reflect ongoing support and progress in these areas.