



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

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2014-2015**

**The Thomas C. Giordano Middle School**

**Middle School X045**

**2502 Lorillard Place  
Bronx  
NY 10458**

**Principal: Annamaria Giordano**

**Date of Review: April 30, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Melodie Mashel**

## The School Context

The Thomas C. Giordano Middle School is a middle school with 797 students from grade six through grade 8. The school population comprises 13% Black, 80% Hispanic, 4% White, and 2% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 21% 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 91.0%.

## 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>Additional Findings</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>Celebration</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>Developing</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>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**2.2 Assessment**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

The school uses common assessments, checks for student understanding and rubrics to monitor student progress toward mastery of standards.

### Impact

Systems for monitoring student progress provide students with actionable feedback and inform teacher instructional adjustments, thus supporting the learning needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have established a consistent grading policy. Criteria for student grading include the assessment of student class participation, class exams, classwork, projects, portfolios and homework.
- Teachers use results from writing baselines and end lines, iReady, content based unit assessments and student written responses to literature to assess student progress and provide students with feedback about their work.
- Students use rubrics to assess the quality of their work, engage in peer review to gain an understanding of their next steps to elevate their work to standard levels. For example, a student shared that after completing his argumentative essay on whether Lyddie, the character in a text, should petition against child labor, he used rubric criteria several times to revise his work and move it to the next level.
- Teachers consistently check for student understanding of lessons taught using a wide array of systems including, the use of Kagan structures, exit slips, teacher/student one to one conferences and student written reflections

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### Findings

School structures to support the analysis of student work are unfolding. Teachers are beginning to assume leadership roles.

### Impact

Teacher team collaborations that result in improving teacher practice are inconsistent, thus hindering student progress. Structures that include teachers in decisions making about student learning have not yet fully resulted in building teacher capacity.

### Supporting Evidence

- Common planning time is provided for teachers to meet to analyze assessment data, further align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and to deepen teacher understanding of Danielson's Framework teaching competencies.
- While the school leader expressed that the school has weekly structured teacher collaborations, an observed teacher team met informally without the use of a protocol to analyze student assessment data and work. For example, the teacher team focus group met with a school leader to examine the work of a group of struggling students. In the observed teacher team meeting, it was determined that both the student groupings and cycles of intervention needed to be adjusted. However, teacher team reflection around teacher practice to support students is not yet routinely addressed.
- Teachers articulated that in collaboration with their colleagues, they are beginning to share in key decisions about student learning. For example, teachers shared that they meet to look at student work and tweak assignments, change the order of units and share ideas as a result of looking at student work. However, the structured collaboration does not yet typically result in elevating teacher practice.

## Additional Findings

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

Curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Challenging academic tasks are embedded in the school's curriculum.

### Impact

The school's coherent curriculum engages students in rigorous tasks that promotes student thinking and prepares students for college and career.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders adopted Expeditionary Learning as the curricula resource for English language arts (ELA). ELA units have also been integrated into science and social studies content units. A virtual science lab program complements the school's science program. Engage NY modules are used to supplement the school's math curriculum.
- Social studies lessons have been enhanced with the addition of the Word Generation Program, a program geared to amplify students' vocabulary. For example, in a sixth grade social studies class, students were required to use key words from Word Generation to create a rap song. Students are expected to use the words in their written pieces.
- English language arts units engage students in demanding tasks. For example, students in an eighth grade English language arts class read a poem written by Maya Angelou, as well as texts about Ruby Bridges and were expected to synthesize information from the poem that would serve as advice for Ruby Bridges. Students were required to write persuasive essays that provided Ruby Bridges with advice.
- Lesson plans in math emphasize higher level thinking and include authentic problem solving. For example, in an eighth grade math class, students were expected to analyze the cost and package offers of various phone policies and determine which package offered the most for less money.

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

Teacher use of higher level questions that extends student thinking and the use of multiple entry points is an emerging practice. The production of meaningful student work varies across classrooms.

### **Impact**

Across classrooms teacher questioning that extends student thinking, strategies that provide English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) access to lessons and student discussions that engage students in an exchange of ideas are inconsistent, thus resulting in the uneven production of student work that demonstrates high levels of student thinking.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In some classrooms visited, teachers posed high-level questions. For example, in a seventh grade English language arts class students were expected to respond to the question of how propaganda was used to stop the abolitionists? In another class, students were asked a basic recall question such as, what is a carnivore? In addition, questions in this class were posed in a rapid sequence with insufficient wait time for students to respond.
- In three out of the seven classes visited, students engaged in deep discussion about their work or participated in responding to an essential question that sparked high level discourse. For example, in a sixth grade social studies class, students studied the lyrics of numerous songs, determined if they had a negative or positive message and debated which of the song lyrics studied would be acceptable to parents. Throughout the process students were required to explain their thinking.
- In some classes students write argumentative essays providing evidence to support claims and counter claims. However, opportunities for students to engage in the production of high level writing is not yet evident across all content subjects.
- In some classrooms, students were provided with a differentiated task and grouped strategically to support ELLs and SWDs to engage in discussion. For example, in a math class students were provided with a modified math problem to solve. However, in a science class of bilingual students, all students were expected to complete the same task. Tasks that provided entry points for students at various levels of English proficiency were not evident.

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

School leaders and staff are beginning to create systems and structures that provide feedback to families about student progress. A culture that provides students with support and guidance about their next levels is developing.

### **Impact**

Structures that share feedback with families about student progress toward standards and provide them with guidance for preparing students for college and career are not yet fully evident, thus hindering students from being prepared for their next levels.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers share their expectations for student learning at Parent Teacher conferences and during scheduled meetings with parents. However, ongoing practices that provide families with information to support students and clearly understand expectations connected to college and career readiness are not yet well-rooted school wide.
- While school leaders have implemented the use of Engrade and one parent shared she received information through Engrade when assignments are not complete, the majority of parents expressed that they did not comprehend or know much about the system.
- Parents expressed that while they understand meeting the Common Core Learning Standards is difficult and the school schedules some workshops that provide advisement about how to prepare students for the high school admissions process, these are not yet provided with the frequency and the level of depth to truly comprehend the process.
- Teachers share with parents the grade expectations necessary to pass a course subject. However, parents articulated that they need support in conveying to students that a minimum passing grade for course work is insufficient, as it does not prepare them for the demands of college and career.