



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ann Mersereau

Middle School X206

**2280 Aqueduct Avenue
Bronx
NY 10466**

Principal: David Neering

**Date of review: November 13, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale**

The School Context

Ann Mersereau is a middle school with 307 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 12% Black, 86% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 19% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.4%.

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	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	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	Proficient
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:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The instructional team is engaged in ongoing refinement of curricula to align to Common Core Learning Standards, content standards and instructional shifts, and curricula and tasks are consistently planned to emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The refinement of academic tasks across content areas are developed collaboratively, and are planned to provide learners with opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks and discussions that provide all students with access to the Common Core Learning Standards and promote college and career readiness for all learners.

Supporting Evidence:

- Curriculum maps have been created by school staff and adjusted yearly to align curricula to the Common Core, better meet the needs of students, incorporate the instructional shifts, and meet the city wide instructional expectations. This year adjustments were made to ensure a staircase of complexity within units to allow for multiple entry points to the curriculum for students. Teachers are using the SIOP model to scaffold instruction, adapt the content of lessons, links to prior learning, modeling, guided practice, multiple forms of grouping, and hands on activities. There is also a focus on ensuring formative assessments are in place to allow for multiple adjustments to instruction over the course of a unit.
- The school has adopted and adapted Connected Mathematics Project 3 (CMP3) and Code X for English language arts (ELA). Lesson plans show Common Core Learning Standards aligned learning targets with attention to student grouping and support options that can be implemented. Specifically in math, real world tasks used in the CMP3 math curriculum are designed to promote higher order thinking.
- In the content areas of science and social studies, the focus is reading and writing based on informational text, the use of evidence to support claims, and increasing academic vocabulary. The use of the Collins Writing Program in content areas across grades assists in these efforts.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

While the school is beginning to align pedagogical expectations with the Danielson Framework, and teachers provide some instructional supports, there is inconsistency in the emphasis on higher order thinking skills, the use of instructional scaffolds and multiple entry points that would promote in-depth analysis, deepen student engagement, and enrich classroom discussions.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers are beginning to implement academic supports to yield meaningful student work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and special education students, to engage in high level discussions and create meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers continue to work on a variety of ways to scaffold instruction, including adaption of content, links to past learning, modeling, guided practice, multiple forms of grouping, hands on activities, and multiple forms of assessment.
- The level of engagement and participation in lessons observed varied across classrooms. Some lessons were teacher-directed with minimal opportunities for students to talk or work in groups, and higher order questioning or multiple entry points in lessons to meet the needs of all students were not evident in several classrooms. For example in an 8th grade math class, although students were seated at table groups according to ability, they were presented with the same task and received little feedback from the teacher. Several students quickly completed the task with no further direction while others struggled with minimal support.
- Across classrooms visited, the majority of lessons were teacher-centered and students responded to teacher-generated oral questions during full-class discussions. In most classrooms, students were not engaged in peer-to-peer or full-class discussions, and students were not observed generating their own questions or responding directly to their peers. For example, in a science lab where students were expected to investigate and describe the relationship between the mass and volume of various objects, the time spent on the direct teaching portion of the lesson limited students' time for independent work with their lab partners.
- In most classes, student discussion was limited by low-level questioning or low-level tasks provided by the teacher. Many questions were recall and relied on a student's memory. For example, in a 6th grade ELA class the teacher asked student; "What does it mean to illustrate?" and "What does consume mean?"
- In a few classrooms students participated in group activities that were differentiated and emphasized multiple levels of support from teachers and other school staff. For example, in a 7th grade self-contained class students were adding and subtracting fractions with lowest common denominator word problems. Students were observed working in three guided practice teams whereby the teacher worked with the most struggling students, the paraprofessional worked with the mid-level students, while the highest-level students worked in independent partnerships.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

The school uses common assessments, performance based rubrics and grading policies aligned to key standards to gain a clear understanding of student progress towards goals.

Impact

Effective curricular and instructional adjustments and actionable feedback lead students towards the advancement of goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use common assessments that align to the Code X curricula in ELA and the CMP3 in math. In ELA, the school uses the post-tests provided after each unit and has created mid-unit tests incorporating critical thinking questions from the text as formative assessments. The CMP3 materials in math include a pre- and post-test option as well as formative assessments throughout the unit. Additionally, rubrics and focused correction areas are introduced at the beginning of units to guide students during tasks.
- The data from unit tests is tracked so the teachers can see where students are not meeting standards. Teachers review the tracking sheets during team meetings and adjust the curricula to meet the instructional needs of students. For example in a 7th grade ELA class ELLs and students with individual education plans are given additional time to complete assignments. The teacher has additional check-ins with these students to address individual needs specifically with learning new vocabulary. Adjustments are made to allow for students to take more time for lessons as needed.
- Writing activities are used to promote student thinking. The staff has been trained in the Collins Writing Program and the use of quick writes to check for understanding. ELA teachers review writing and give feedback on a daily basis so student can revise and improve upon their writing drafts.
- Rubrics are used as a formative assessment in classrooms. In ELA and math, feedback informs students of next steps and rubrics are also used for peer assessment. Teachers also use ongoing checks for understanding in the form of conferring, questioning and circulating around the room to discuss next steps with individual students. This practice ensures that teachers make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs. School-wide summative assessment results are analyzed and used to plan instruction and academic intervention services and response to intervention groups. Specifically the staff has been trained in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model that supports the planning of instruction for ELLs.
- Students are aware of the instructional objectives and write goals addressing these at the beginning of each marking period. Students self-assess their own learning and progress towards individual goals and engage in a reflection process that takes place as part of interim reports and the classroom use of checklists, rubrics and the focus correction areas of the Collins Writing Program.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to staff, students and their families, and the school leadership provides systems and supports to ensure all learners progress towards goals.

Impact

Structures that support the school's high expectations contribute to mutual accountability for staff, students, and families providing students with a clear path towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Non-negotiable instructional expectations are communicated to staff through the staff handbook and ongoing to parents through monthly meetings. Additional structures for sharing high expectations include cabinet meetings, faculty conferences, grade level meetings and the weekly staff memo, all of which align to the school focus areas for this year including the School Comprehensive Plan (SCEP) goals and student goal sheets. Instructional expectations are tracked through interim reports, a college and career readiness program and monthly school notes to parents.
- Frequent classroom observations, feedback from classroom visits, reviews of lesson plans, and regular emails reinforce school-wide professional expectations for the instructional team. Additionally, feedback from supervisors following classroom visits promotes accountability for the expectations of the teaching framework. For example, observation reports and lesson snapshots promote teacher accountability in fostering high levels of student performance, in alignment with the expectations of the Danielson Framework for Teaching.
- Feedback to students on college and career readiness comes in the form of daily feedback on classwork, feedback from staff, self-reflection on interim reports and use of the online grading system Engrade. Each area of the college and career readiness standards is highlighted as a monthly focus across the year. Students receive feedback on whether or not they have exhibited the appropriate behaviors for each area at the end of the monthly focus.
- The student goal sheets and interim report of progress are two ways the school partners with parents to support student progress. Parents are also able to view students' grades and assignments on Engrade. The system also offers teachers and parents the ability to communicate with each other around student work. Holding parent meetings to discuss Common Core Learning Standards expectations, communicating with parents in writing and by phone are additional ways the school partners with parents. Furthermore the parent coordinator holds monthly meetings for parents on topics of specific interest to the parent body.

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

Grade level and vertical teams analyze student work and assessment data of students. Representatives across grade levels and core subjects share inquiry team findings and support Common Core alignment.

Impact

The school's professional collaborations foster reflection, enhance the instructional capacity of teachers and contribute effective instructional strategies that focus on improved student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams, divided into ELA and math, meet bi-monthly for 40 minutes to study the curriculum in each area. These teams review curriculum units, plan lessons and revise pacing calendars. The entire teaching staff participates and science and social studies teachers meet as part of the ELA department. The blocks of time are also used to discuss data from benchmark and unit tests with grade level departments.
- Teacher teams meet every other Tuesday in grade level groupings to support students' academic and social emotional success. These teams meet in a child study format and systematically put social emotional strategies in place with targeted students to help these students succeed academically.
- The four inquiry teams meet bi-monthly for 30 minutes and follow a protocol for looking at student work. The teams consist of ELA, math, science and social studies teachers as well as a special education and English as a second specialist teacher. They use protocols to look at student work and use this information to make instructional decisions for groups of students as well as overall curricular adjustments. One teacher from each team presents student work and the work is examined by the group for employment of the instructional shifts, rigor, student understanding and next steps. The school is structured so that initiatives are undertaken across grades and content areas, leading to adjustments to instructional curriculum maps and coherent curriculum for students.
- Staff has participated in professional development in Universal Design for Learning and the SIOP model in an effort to design more strategic extensions and supports for students. This had led to teachers planning targeted instruction for ELLs with a focus on supports to scaffold content, vocabulary development and a language objective for each lesson taught.
- Structures that support distributive leadership include an ELA coach, math coach, and an individual education plan lead teacher. The instructional cabinet teachers are in leadership roles for the inquiry team, student support team, and the positive behavioral interventions and support team. Staff development is also designed and delivered by lead teachers. Sports leadership groups for students are facilitated by the basketball coach and physical education teachers.