

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Fannie Lou Hamer

Middle School X286

**1001 Jennings Street
Bronx
NY 10460**

Principal: Lorraine Chanon

**Dates of review: April 29, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Teresa Caccavale**

The School Context

Fannie Lou Hamer is a middle school with 267 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 26% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-14 was 90.4%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core

<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</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	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.	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

Findings

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Higher order skills are consistent for all learners across grades and content.

Impact

The school's curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Unit plans and lesson plans promote higher order thinking skills including scaffolds and extensions of task.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal with the support of the vertical team leaders ensures that all teachers create curriculum maps with coherent unit plans and a pacing calendar with detailed lesson plans for each subject area. These maps include the major and minor standards addressed in each unit, essential questions and concepts, texts used, academic language needed, and the summative assessment. These units are then converted into daily pacing calendars with the teacher's learning target, "look fors", performance of understanding, lesson and resources. Each pacing calendar is shared on Google Docs with all teachers. Teachers link resources such as presentations, assessments, lessons, student tasks, and learning targets, in the pacing calendars, and standards are broken down into sub-standards and aligned to the New York City Performance Assessments.
- The vertical team examines each Common Core Learning Standard closely to note the increased level of student mastery expected as the standard moves up the grade levels. Student benchmark work is examined to note patterns among sub-groups of learners. Using the standard as focus, a lesson plan is created. Lesson plans are aligned to the targeted standards-based benchmark set by the vertical team for the trimester. Then each lesson plan is differentiated with the support of the Integrated Collaborative Teachers (ICT) and the English as a second language (ESL) teacher to be reflective of the range of learners in the classroom, and includes scaffolds, activities, and translations into Native Language, or additional guided group practice.
- Faculty employs the instructional shifts of the Common Core Learning Standards to devise rigorous and aligned curricula across the grades. For example, English language arts (ELA) classes across the school are all working on RL6-8.1 (citing textual evidence) at the same time in order to share best practices and spiral the learning of essential standards throughout a student's middle school career. A Google folder allows the principal to monitor curriculum maps and pacing calendars. Teachers develop detailed curriculum maps which provide an overview of each unit for the year. All units reflect foundation and mastery to ensure students have a deep understanding of foundational knowledge as well as unit mastery over grade level text. Benchmarks are analyzed to revise the curriculum maps. For example, idea writing for argument did not reflect the reading for information when looking at students work products, therefore the ELA units were revised with additional opportunities for students to cite text-based evidence. Similarly in math, many students were unable to construct logical arguments reflecting student understanding of the math content. Once again unit maps were revised, asking students to define concepts in order to get stronger argument, and in social studies maps have been revised to ensure a focus on critical thinking skills in history.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide varied entry points into the curricula, and students' work product and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Across classrooms, there are consistent opportunities for all learners to engage in meaningful discussions and produce meaningful work products. However, high performers are not always challenged to their full potential, thus limiting opportunities for all learners to engage in higher order thinking tasks to accelerate and own their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- To implement instruction, teachers use I do, we do, you do methodology in their teaching. Using daily learning targets based on standards and content, students are also given daily "look fors" to support self-assessment and mastery of the daily learning targets on tasks and performances of understanding (POUs). These are modeled in the "I do" portion of the lesson. During the "we do" portion of the lesson, teachers use cooperative learning structures to stimulate communication between students around the "look fors." Teachers pose an open-ended question for students to consider and share their answers with classmates. Questions are based on Common Core Learning Standards as well as grade level texts with scaffolds to allow multiple entry points for different learners. Teachers use learning targets, POUs and "look fors" to support student ownership of learning on a daily basis that is evidenced in the "you do" part of the lesson.
- Teachers use different modalities in order to engage students with different needs and learning styles. English language learners and Individual Education Plan students are provided with an audio version of the text. Content areas are also provided in translated versions of texts to align instruction for ELLs to provide them with an entry point to the material. Teachers provide work that is aligned to that student's level of mastery as evidenced in the most recent benchmark. They also supplement texts and materials with videos and visuals. Students are provided with guided notes that include the learning target and appropriate look-fors so they can self-evaluate as they are completing tasks. However, varied strategies that provide all students with multiple opportunities to engage in challenging academic tasks were not always pervasive across all classrooms lessening school-wide instructional coherence for all learners to demonstrate higher order thinking skills.
- In an eighth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) social studies class students were observed working in small groups in seven different stations. Each station addressed life in the 1950's and students were working with partners to analyze station documents and on-line resources. Each group were writing their annotations in the margins of the documents and then stating a claim with relevant evidence. Students read important paragraphs, carefully identifying the central idea of the text in discussion with their partners, and used information from the station's documents to provide evidence to support their claim. The beginner ELL group was observed working at its own station with modified packets supported directly by the English as a Second Language teacher. Similarly, in a sixth grade science class students were working in small homogeneous purposeful groups inferring biome types using text and image sources. Students shared the completed work with their shoulder partners. The teacher then asked for a student volunteer to share out what their partner said. In both classes collaborative student groups worked independently of the teacher and used the vocabulary associated with content to enhance their discussions with academic language. Written student work illustrated students' understandings of the learning targets of the lessons.
- In some classes although students were seated in groups, teacher directed lessons did not offer different pathways to promote student discussion. For example in seventh and eighth grade math classes students were expected to use theoretical probability to justify a prediction. Although the teachers provided the students with a clear learning target and modeled for the students what she expected them to do independently, teacher centered questioning of the class occurred, limiting students the sufficient time to work with their group to use, interpret, and justify their thinking.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

School leaders and teachers use common assessment data in order to measure progress towards school goals and student progress. Data is used to support decisions on curricula adjustments.

Impact

Teachers utilize data to measure student progress and school goal attainment, and to adjust lessons and instructional practices, thereby enabling students to demonstrate mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers use a school-wide grading policy and task-specific rubrics aligned to curricula to provide feedback on student performance in all disciplines. For example, an “Argument Writing Rubric”, attached to samples of work for each student, provided feedback on work seen on hallway bulletin boards and in students’ folders. Across grades and subjects, a portfolio maintained by each student evidences teacher and student monitoring of progress from one assessment to the next. The folder includes rubrics for assessment of the task, copies of each assessment, and the student’s work with scores and teacher comments about the student’s strengths and areas of need.
- Teachers respond to benchmark assessment data and modify instruction as necessary. The units are broken up by “foundational” where students are exposed to new concepts and skills, and then students need to “master” their ability to use these new concepts and skills in a summative assessment that is redrafted with deeper critical thinking into a portfolio piece. Each summative assessment is designed to be challenging and allow students to show off their mastery in the discipline. The principal stated during our conversation as students work on their written summative assessments, teachers build in cooperative learning structures around open-ended questions devised by the students to deepen their understanding of the work through conversation.
- Teachers use rubrics to grade both the benchmarks and the summative assessment. Using daily learning targets based on standards and content, students are also given daily “look fors” to support self-assessment and mastery of the daily learning targets on student tasks or POU’s. Teachers use learning targets, POU’s and “look fors” to support student ownership of learning on a daily basis. “Look fors” are the means by which all students can self-assess whether they have attained the learning target. Teachers also share student progress through the Mastery Connect standards trackers so students can see their growth from benchmark to benchmark. Teachers use the results from benchmarks to help students see their progress toward standards’ mastery, and use standards based “look fors” in lessons to provide students with tools to improve their benchmark performance. In Teacher Ease, students work habits are tracked based on the school’s mission for students to work effectively. Advisers share the criteria for doing well with targeted “look fors” in this category and help students track their work habits in key areas.
- During the student meeting, students stated that they are all well aware of grading practices and expectations for mastery as teachers regularly engage them in conferences for goal setting and review of their work. They displayed rubrics and checklists from their portfolios and explained that teachers guide them in using the rubrics and checklists to determine what they need to do to “get a good score”. Some students noted that they also go online to look at their performance data on Mastery Connect and others reported that they get feedback from school advisors on their work habits.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations and offers on going and detailed feedback and guidance advisement supports for all students.

Impact

High expectations and a system of accountability for students and teachers, along with supports to staff, students, and families, to achieve the expectations, prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Administrators use conference notes, classroom visits, reviews of unit and lesson plans, feedback from observations, and analyses of student work, to hold all staff accountable for the school's high expectations. The principal uses a spreadsheet to share class specific results on assessments, identifying individual and groups of students who met or did not meet a targeted level of mastery. Observation reports show explicit next steps for the re-teaching of content and skills not yet mastered by students. Teachers reported that administrators visit classrooms regularly to offer additional support and feedback.
- The staff policy manual and student parent handbook reinforce school wide expectations for teaching and culture. The staff handbook is divided into sections of academics that include lesson planning, professional development, grading policy, observation policy, buddy teachers, and student work. The parent/student handbook highlights the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional programs, performance requirements, school safety, special programs, after school programs and visitor's policy.
- Grade teams meet in August to construct a common vision and consistent expectations across the grade. This common vision is based on the school mission, "Work Effectively, Think Critically, and Act Compassionately". These ideals are broken down into learning targets that are then reinforced in the classroom, the advisory, and the larger community. Grade teams decide upon common expectations and procedures that will be taught and reinforced across the grade level. At the very beginning of school, each student receives a handbook which details the school mission of working effectively, thinking critically, and acting compassionately. Advisors discuss with advisees each pillar of the mission. Each lesson is infused with cooperative learning structures in which students need to share their own work, listen to others' ideas, and provide positive feedback to their peers in the form of gambits, as modelled by the teacher. These activities are woven into the first month of school as part of the class and advisory curriculum. The advisories continue to monitor student success on "work effectively, think critically and act compassionately". Each grade team has distinct foci. The sixth grade advisories target habits for working effectively using daily reflection, the seventh grade targets effective work habits and how to act compassionately including community service projects, which culminate in an eighth grade portfolio combining all three aspects of the mission.

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

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of the Common Core. Teacher teams review and analyze data and student work consistently.

Impact

The instructional capacity of teachers to analyze student data has improved allowing more focus on improving student progress and student learning experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- Using student benchmarks based on Common Core Learning Standards, vertical teams analyze data to find patterns and then look at student work to find evidence of common strengths and struggles. The team makes a hypothesis about why students are successful or need more support. Vertical teams closely examine Common Core Learning Standards aligned rubrics to ascertain what students are able to do and use student work as evidence. Using their hypothesis, vertical teams suggest a pedagogical strategy that might help students perform more successfully. The team will try the strategy and use student work to determine if it was successful. Students were identified for support based on benchmark data as needing remediation, at near mastery, or at mastery for Common Core Learning Standards. Using the data and research work of the Professional Learning Communities, teachers develop collaboratively unit and lesson plans on vertical teams based on Common Core aligned rubrics. Special educators and ESL specialists work with general educators to collaborate on curriculum. Pacing calendars and lesson plans are adjusted for the needs of different sub-groups based on designation and student benchmarks. All of these practices translate into focused learning targets and "look fors" which allow teachers to collect formative assessments and give daily feedback using the "look fors" as criteria of assessment.
- Teachers expressed that the vertical teams allowed them to understand what foundations were needed in each grade to be successful in the following grade. They said that they were meeting more often and many teachers are now sharing resources, strategies, and plans. Furthermore, in order to differentiate effectively, teachers meet weekly in grade level teams in order to target specific student groups such as IEP students and ELL's.
- Minutes and agendas of team meetings indicate that all teachers meet regularly and engage in the collection, disaggregation, and analysis of data from assessments. Teachers stated that they use assessment data to form strategy groups with differentiated tasks. The principal described adjustments to math curricula that now incorporate content to provide deeper coverage of the "major work of the grade" and improved alignment to "focus standards" identified for each grade.
- The school wide professional development action plan supports professional learning through a comprehensive model including workshops and differentiated activities that allow for teachers' choice and coinciding inquiry cycles to assess the impact of professional learning on student outcomes. Examples of PD activities include planning of text dependent questions, anticipating student responses to text depending questions and selecting rigorous text dependent questions and tasks to be used as formative assessments.