Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Comprehensive Model School Project M.S. 327

Middle – High School X327

1501 Jerome Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452

Principal: Alixandre Ricci

Date of review: March 26, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cheryl McClendon

The School Context

CMSP 327 is a middle - high school with 632 students from grade 6 through grade 11. The school population comprises 76% Hispanic, 23% Black and 1% White students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Well Developed**
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		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Well Developed**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Well Developed**

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and tasks in a coherent way.

Impact
The planning of Common Core-aligned, coherent curricula support student engagement in higher-order skills and student learning and ensures that students consistently demonstrate their thinking across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Impact Math Curriculum in conjunction with CMSP Math in grades 6 through 8. Across the grades there is an emphasis on writing in math and using math vocabulary.

- The school-created Common Core-aligned English language arts curriculum incorporates the balanced literacy workshop model. Some English language arts units are compacted and others are supplemented based on the needs of the students. Resources and structures such as the ELA Writing Continuum, Short Answer Checklist and RACE (Restate Answer Cite Explain) are used across the grades. Lesson plans reflect daily independent reading of texts of increasing complexity and tier II Response to intervention for small groups of students. In order to support English language learners' acquisition of academic vocabulary, teachers implement the Word Generation vocabulary program, which is supported by the Middle School Quality Initiative.

- All curricula are mapped. Science curriculum in grades 6 through 11 follows the New York State Science standards and social studies follows the New York City scope and sequence. Science and social studies curriculum maps reflect key standards, essential questions, major understandings and assessments. Curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans reflect alignment to the CCLS and Regents requirements to support college and career readiness.

- Across the grades anchor texts and resources are selected based upon cultural relevance and interdisciplinary connections. Some examples are Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe and Thank You Ma'am by Langston Hughes.

- A focus on higher-order questioning is reflected in curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans, with questions such as "What role does tolerance and perseverance play in creating societal change?" and "How does silence perpetuate violence?"

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices reflect the school's belief about how students learn best, as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. While teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points across classrooms, in a couple of classrooms there was an absence of strategically-planned supports to increase or extend student learning.

Impact
Student learning is enhanced in classrooms where teaching practices that provide multiple entry points are consistently implemented.

Supporting Evidence

- Many classrooms visited reflected a focus on the school's instructional focus which is using questioning to engage students in higher-order critical thinking. For example in a 9th grade global history class, in exploration of the question, "How does art reflect the values of the Renaissance?" small groups of students engaged in a gallery-walk to conduct a cross-reference analysis of famous prints from the Renaissance period with the various philosophies from which they emerged. A focus on the use of academic and tier 3 vocabulary words such as humanism, secularism and realism was observed and the teacher circulated to facilitate analytical discussions. While this high level of questioning and engagement was observed across classrooms, there were a few classrooms where this was not evident. For example in a ninth grade English language arts class the focus of the lesson was on revising literary essays to include important details, however the facilitation was teacher-dominated with no opportunities for student discussion.

- In a tenth grade math class students worked in collaborative groups to prove theorems about parallelograms. The guiding question, "How can we prove that quadrilaterals are parallelograms?" required students to examine the properties of a given parallelogram to prove the equation $\Delta ABC \cong \Delta CDA$. The use of math academic vocabulary was observed as students engaged in collaborative discussions to prove the equation while the teacher circulated to listen in and assess. A representative from each group was selected to post the solutions on the whiteboard.

- Independent reading was observed in some of the classrooms visited. In a 6th grade English language arts class the teacher conferred with individual students and recorded student reading behaviors and responses as the class engaged in independent reading. Individual texts reflected varying genres and levels of complexity. Students knew their Fountas and Pinnell independent reading level and were able to articulate why they selected their individual texts. Two groups of students were reading the same texts in preparation for the Socratic seminar discussions to be facilitated in the following period.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms teachers consistently use rubrics, performance-based assessments, student self-reflection and protocols for looking at student work that provide actionable feedback for students and teachers. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress and to refine curricula and instruction.

Impact
The school's use of rubrics and common assessments facilitates actionable feedback for students and teachers and informs ongoing curricula refinements.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams use Common Core-aligned and/or New York state content standard-aligned rubrics for every subject, in every grade. Students are provided with a rubric at the beginning of every unit of study. Across the grades the Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain (RACE) rubric is used to assess response-writing proficiency. Teacher teams utilize a Looking at Student Work protocol and document next instructional steps for focal students. Teachers also provide rubric-aligned written feedback to students and students engage in peer assessment, self-assessment of writing drafts and performance-based tasks.

- Performance-based assessments are modeled after Common Core and New York State Exams, reflecting Common Core and New York state content standards. Standards-aligned diagnostic, interim and predictive assessments are created and implemented by teachers. Renaissance Learning Program's Star Reading online assessments that are administered quarterly illuminate student growth percentiles across the school and inform lesson objectives and tier II interventions.

- Teachers confer with students during independent reading and document conference notes in conference binders. Entrance slips are administered as a diagnostic tool at the beginning of lessons. The teacher quickly reviews entrance slips to plan for small-group instruction during each instructional period. Exit slips are administered at the end of lessons. Teachers analyze exit slips to determine what should be re-taught at the whole class level and/or which students are in need of further intervention within a given subject area and concept.

- Edmodo and Engrade online grading systems are used to capture formative and summative assessment data for faculty, student and parent access.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty systematically emphasize high expectations for professionalism and academic excellence to the entire school community through multiple modes of communication. Support is provided for teachers through professional development and supportive feedback provided to students guides their trajectory towards college and career readiness.

Impact
Teachers receive professional development support to meet the high expectations of school leaders, in a culture of mutual accountability. Feedback supports student progress and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Every year faculty members receive the CMSP 327 Faculty Handbook which delineates school-wide policy, programs and expectations. Included in the manual are a narrative statement on the school's core values, the school-wide instructional plan and focus, guidelines for teacher team meetings, school-wide grading policy and expectations for classroom environment, amongst many other items of importance.

- School leaders and faculty have developed a yearlong professional development plan to provide teachers support in topics such as: Edmodo, Engrade and record-keeping, independent reading strategies, Word generation, Common Core Learning Standards, SIOP strategies for English language learners, and response to intervention.

- Participation in the Progressive Redesign Opportunity for Schools of Excellence (PROSE) program, allows the school greater autonomy in scheduling and allocation of budget. Through this program the school has modified the school schedule to accommodate one hour of parent engagement every Thursday during which teacher team members hold parent meetings or communicate via telephone to apprise parents of school wide expectations, student progress and curriculum highlights. In addition, flexible scheduling opportunities facilitate the school's peer observation program through which teachers are also held accountable to school-wide expectations by their peers.

- Across the grades, every Saturday morning students attend English language arts and math practice classes. Each class begins with an assessment-based skills-focused lesson. Immediately after the lesson, students take a practice test on the focal skill. The morning session culminates with a review of the day's lesson. Through this process, students receive immediate feedback. Saturday afternoon sessions are designated for sports and arts programs.

- The school participates in the ExpandED Options apprenticeship and internship program by The After-School Corporation (TASC). Participating students engage in real-world learning experiences in programs such as *Lifeguarding* at the Asphalt Green or Henry Street Settlement pools or *Teen Chef: Skills for Life* at the Sylvia Center. Questions such as, "Where would you like to be in life, five years from now?" and "What will be your ideal career?" posed during mandatory mock interviews engage students in reflecting on their future and demonstrating ownership of their learning.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed

Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in constantly examining teacher practice, assessment data and student work for focal students. Embedded distributed leadership practices reflect effective teacher leadership and enhance teacher decision-making.

Impact
The work of teacher teams has resulted in school-wide instructional coherence leading to continuous shared improvement of teacher practice and increased student improvement. Teachers play an integral role in making decisions that positively impact student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Middle school teacher teams meet every Tuesday and high school teacher teams meet every Wednesday. Teacher team meetings are designated for analyzing student work and/or discussing peer observations. During observation of the 6th grade teacher team meeting the presenting teacher shared student responses that students had written using the Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain (RACE) format. Teachers analyzed four to five previously scored samples reflecting student writing at different levels of proficiency on the RACE rubric and document and share examples and evidence of what each student knows and is able to do, possible misconceptions or learning needs and differentiation strategies to move each student's learning forward.

- Teachers engage in examining teacher practice through the school's formalized peer observation program. As a designated peer observer, each teacher is required to utilize a low-inference observation template to record the teaching moves and student interaction observed in a colleague's class. Teachers analyze data collected from the peer observation protocol and identify trends within and across the various disciplines. For example, *management* and *engagement* were two areas identified for further support across all core subject areas. As a result greater emphasis was placed on professional development within these areas.

- The school has established many structures for distributing leadership such as: teacher mentors, grade team leaders, instructional coaches, and parent workshop liaison. A large percentage of teachers facilitate targeted professional development, attend conferences and turn-key acquired information to faculty.