



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

M.S. 51 William Alexander

Middle School K051

**350 5th Ave
Brooklyn
NY 11215**

Principal: Lenore DiLeo-Berner

**Date of review: November 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rod Bowen**

The School Context

M.S. 51 William Alexander is a middle school with 1,127 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 12% Asian, 10% Black, 19% Hispanic, and 57% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.8%.

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	Additional Findings	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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , 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	Celebration	Well Developed
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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School staff effectively communicates high expectations to families regarding paths to college and career readiness. A culture of high expectations provides feedback, guidance and support to all students.

Impact

Families successfully partner with the school in supporting student progress in meeting high expectations set by the school. Students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Last year, the parents association raised money to pay for an online grading system that was introduced this fall. Though the staff is in the process of getting 100% of teachers to engage the platform consistently, parents agree that they are kept aware of how their children are performing academically. One common means of staying abreast of student achievement is having to sign the graded exams of their children. All parents agree that teachers are very responsive to email and ongoing communication with families as needed.
- Parents have also raised money to establish English Language Arts (ELA) libraries in every classroom as well as for professional development provided by Teachers College for MS 51 teachers.
- Parents, staff and students all noted that the school puts a concerted effort into teaching organizational skills and self-advocacy. One student stated that she has learned how to plan her time better. Another claimed that the school has taught her that her opinion is important. A parent asserted that his daughter's confidence and sense of independence have grown immensely and that children are gaining the ability to navigate a larger system.
- The schools 97% next level readiness score on the School Quality Snapshot is informed in part by students having access to three years of foreign language, accelerated courses, as well as an assistant principal and guidance counselor that stay with the same cohort of students for all three years.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Although across classrooms student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation, multiple entry points are not strategically utilized to provide high quality supports and scaffolds for those who need them.

Impact

All students, including those with Individual Education Programs (IEPs) are not appropriately engaged so that they can demonstrate higher order thinking skills in their work.

Supporting Evidence

- In a science class, students had to process the answer to a question by briefly writing about it before discussing it with a peer. During the class discussion, the teacher guided students to answer questions asked by others. In general, questioning on the part of students was valued as evidenced by the teacher asking students to write down questions that came to mind so that they could get to them later in the period.
- Students were heard building on each other's ideas in a social studies class. For example, a student began her contribution to a class discussion by saying, "I kind of agree with Bella because..."
- Students were asked to analyze their reading notes to look for patterns and trends in an ELA class. The identified pattern would inform an upcoming writing assignment. Students engaged each other in conversations regarding whether or not they wanted to stick with the topic or gather other evidence to make a different claim for the essay.
- In a science class engaged in a laboratory activity, students described, identified, and observed but at no point were they asked to process, synthesize or interpret what they were doing.
- In a classroom of students with IEPs, there was little opportunity for high-level independent thinking as most of the questions were close ended. For example, "What does the 12 and the two mean? So it's telling me that I can eat 12 servings over ___ hours." In addition, there was no evidence of students being allowed time for productive struggle as the teacher answered some of her own questions and did aspects of the class assignment for students on their worksheets.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Curricular documents contain learning experiences that emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills through the strategic integration of Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.

Impact

All learners in all grades and content areas are provided with curricula that promote college and career readiness, and require the demonstration of student thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the lesson plans reviewed, text based experiences were coherently informed by the Common Core Reading Standard which requires students to *cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text*.
- Among the tasks found in curricular documents were making connections between characters and conflicts, synthesizing information and creating summary outlines, teaching each other tricks and skills to successfully operate with rational numbers, and evaluate different sources in order to identify the economic, social and political aspects of different eras in history.
- In one lesson the task required students to demonstrate their understanding of the content not by coming up with answers, but by generating questions.
- Lesson plans reflected the value of student voice and discussion. For example, students had to share their responses to the Do Now with a partner to clarify their perspectives before bringing them to the whole class.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula. In addition, commons assessments are used to determine student progress across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable feedback from ongoing assessment practices. Data from common assessments inform curricular and instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- Students stated that rubrics tell them what they need to do in order to complete an assignment correctly as well as what they need to do to do an assignment better. They also noted that rubrics are given to them before they begin a task.
- In describing the kind of feedback he had received, a student explained that he had, "Put a little too much elaboration to the point of being repetitive." Another student shared a scored rubric that showed that she had used the proper order of operations but made minor computation mistakes. She then was able to point to step six in her process and show how she did not simplify correctly.
- An analysis of a student's fiction reading ability showed that he did well with decoding and figuring out unfamiliar vocabulary but was not consistently retaining major details about the text. As a result, the teacher developed a system for him to summarize each chapter of a book on post-its as he reads.
- A science teacher shared a lesson plan that was a response to pre- and post-assessment data. Students were purposefully grouped based on their performance on the assessment and tasked with collaborating to construct the best possible answers to questions using resources posted online.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in regular inquiry based professional collaborations that include the consistent analysis of data and student work.

Impact

The work of teacher teams strengthens instructional practice and progress for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- A teacher team was observed discussing their visit to the classroom of a colleague that teaches a different subject. The focus of their visit was Danielson’s Framework for Teaching 3c: Engaging Student in Learning. They shared low inference evidence and the impact of the teacher’s instructional choices; for example: “Because of the turn and talk, students had to actually think about their note taking as opposed to just copying off the board.” They discussed feedback that they would give the teacher and implications for their own instruction, which included the purposeful use of technology.
- A completed Looking at Student Work-Data Inquiry Protocol from a grade team meeting showed that their analysis of student work revealed that most students, “clearly know a lot about writing an argument”, but that students were not effective in providing evidence. In developing next steps, the team agreed to identify scaffolds and supports for choosing strong evidence such as sentence starters as well as cultivating students’ use of transition words.
- Teachers noted that sharing materials, anchor texts and collaboratively creating rubrics has increased the consistency of instruction within grades more so than in previous years.