



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

J.H.S. 278 Marine Park

Middle School K278

**1925 Stuart Street
Brooklyn
NY 11229**

Principal: Debra Garofalo

**Date of review: November 5, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart**

The School Context

J.H.S. 278 Marine Park is a middle school with 925 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 9% Asian, 47% Black, 17% Hispanic, and 27% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 21% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.1%.

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	Celebration	Well Developed
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	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	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

Teachers use and create common assessments and rubrics that offer a clear picture of student mastery across all content areas. Assessment results are analyzed and reported to track student progress.

Impact

Students and teachers receive actionable and meaningful feedback regarding student achievement and make instructional adjustments so that all students demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Rubrics are widely used with many different kinds of tasks across all content areas. These rubrics are revised as needed to capture the quality of individual tasks and to deepen the feedback aimed at helping students to understand their next steps. Recently a writing rubric that incorporates items encouraging more sophisticated vocabulary and more detailed additional evidence was revised to allow additional open-ended suggestions for improvement. A math rubric was revised to include a focus on computational fluency and use of academic vocabulary.
- Students stated that the actionable feedback they get from teachers and peers helps them take steps to improve their work, especially their writing. One student stated that feedback and reflection on her work provides opportunities for deeper insight into the content. Another student stated that having fellow students provide rubric-based feedback gives her “a different point of view.”
- Uniform assessments are developed by teachers and administered regularly to assess student progress. Teachers created baseline assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and math and scored them in grade-level teams. The results of these baseline assessments are analyzed and shared so that teachers across the content areas know their students’ performance levels. Periodic assessments are often based on prior State ELA and math exams to reinforce the connection to Common Core Learning Standards. As a result of the analysis of on-demand writing in all content areas, the grade 6 teachers identified content specific instructional strategies they could implement. Deepened awareness of the differences in content areas, such as the need for more fact-based questions in science, made crafting writing tasks in these content areas more complex.
- Student achievement is tracked and shared using an online grade reporting and document sharing system. A clear picture of student progress is presented through longitudinal assessment results in English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language. One student’s assessment record showed that in grade 6 she had earned 60 out of 100 points on the math third quarter exam. In grade 7, the same student earned 80 out of 100 points on the first quarter exam. Achievement for English Language Learner (ELL) students is reported so that all teachers know and track their students’ English as New Language (ENL) status from Entering to Commanding to Former ELL.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and are based on the belief that students learn best when they are active participants in their learning. However, not all instruction strategically provides extensions and multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Students are engaged in challenging tasks and produce meaningful work products that demonstrate higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Students engage in tasks that reinforce writing and speaking skills in all content areas. In a science class students analyzed a cartoon about mosquitos, spoke with partners about their thinking, and made connections between the cartoon and the human body. In a social studies class the students answered questions about Chinese immigration and explored connections with current immigration debates. Teachers do not always push students to justify their opinions with evidence, limiting the connections students make with the content of the lessons.
- Most teachers engage students in activities that require them to create meaning and relevance as owners of their own learning. One teacher stated the expectation that all students should be continuously engaged and directed them to move onto the next question even if they were waiting for her to assist them. However, in another class, a group of students had completed their task and indicated they had to wait for the teacher to direct them before they could continue onto the next task, resulting in lost time on task. Questioning in some classes was teacher directed which limited the development of rich student-to-student discourse.
- One teacher created differentiated tasks for students who were identified for academic intervention and additional support in math. Students worked together in small groups to help each other as they solved one-step, two-step, and multi-step inequalities. The teacher conferenced with individual students spending more time with those students who required more intensive support.
- In one class with general education students and students with disabilities, the teachers, who routinely plan instructional practices together, provided a variety of supports to help students to develop and use academic vocabulary such as “disinherit,” and “misdemeanor.” The students explained they were applying their prior knowledge of how laws are made to the study of the Code of Hammurabi.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

Curricula emphasizing rigorous habits and skills are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and coherently integrate the instructional shifts.

Impact

Coherence across grades and subjects promotes college and career readiness. Tasks are designed so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal reviews curriculum maps and unit plans to ensure the integration of the shifts and the inclusion of rigorous tasks with higher-order questioning. Lesson plans regularly include tasks that require students to state and support a claim and emphasize academic vocabulary needed for success in high school and college, such as the constant of proportionality, contour intervals, and countenance.
- The instructional focus on writing includes having students produce two on-demand pieces each marking period in each content area. This focus was consistently seen in lesson plans across all grades and content areas. A lesson plan in science requires students to write an exit ticket analyzing how the body maintains homeostasis. A task in mathematics asks students to explain why a graph represents a proportional relationship and in a social studies lesson students are to write in detail about a topic that had “sparked an interesting and prolonged discussion.”
- Almost all lesson plans include support for ELLs and students with disabilities by providing definitions of terms used in complex texts, requiring students to represent their work in words, Venn diagrams, or symbols, and explicitly identifying students for specific supports. For example, one lesson plan listed groups of struggling students to be matched with peer mentors as they prepare for a class presentation ensuring that all students must engage in challenging tasks and demonstrate their thinking.
- Lesson plans make explicit connections between literature and modern real-life events. For example one lesson based on Steinbeck’s *The Pearl*, explores the connections between the events in the novel and the racism depicted in political cartoons in twenty-first century Mexico.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The entire staff establishes a culture for learning and provides clear feedback that effectively communicates high expectations for college and career readiness to students and parents.

Impact

Students make progress toward meeting expectations as they prepare for high school and beyond.

Supporting Evidence

- The parent handbook states that the staff will work in concert with the parents to ensure students are challenged and successful. It goes on to outline learning expectations that students will “set, pursue, and accomplish realistic and challenging goals” on their way to a lifetime of meaningful work. The handbook also has tips for parents to help their adolescents develop strong habits of learning by emphasizing and prioritizing academics over other activities. Parents believe they are partners with the school to ensure the highest quality experience for their children. For example, parents worked with the principal and the School Leadership Team to revise the homework policy so that students would focus primarily on preparing for tests during the last week of each marking period.
- Parents access information about their child’s academic progress through PupilPath, an online grade reporting system. Teachers post information about homework, class assignments, reading lists, attendance, and grades so that parents and students have access to up-to-date information about their performance. Students stated that they use PupilPath daily and parents interviewed reported they also use the system to keep informed about their child’s progress and to communicate directly and frequently with teachers. There are over 500 parents actively using the system.
- The school staff includes two guidance counselors, one of whom works directly with students on the high school application process. Students interviewed agreed that this school prepares them for high school. They highly value the opportunities they have to take Regents exams in science and math and also to earn high school credit. Several students spoke about the strong connection between the writing they are doing now and what will be expected of them in college. One student expressed that his teachers “build my confidence.”
- One parent indicated that her child is developing critical thinking skills and annotating texts just like one of her siblings in high school. “We see tasks that even our older children didn’t learn.” Other parents stated that students are pushed to give better, more detailed answers and that students with an individualized education program (IEP) learn the same content as all other students, but with supports, so they are equally prepared for high school.

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

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborations that strengthen their practice through continuous analysis of student work and assessment data.

Impact

There is coherence of instruction across grades and content areas and increased student learning as students master their goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet regularly to look at student work, analyze assessment data, create unit and lesson plans, and revise assessments and rubrics. In addition to these programmed meeting times, teachers often voluntarily meet to continue discussions about their practice. In one such meeting, teachers were observed gathering data from an end of unit writing task that was used across all classes on the grade. They recorded what part of the task students in each of their classes had done well on and identified the areas in which they struggled. They found that across the grade students frequently use transition words, but struggle with writing strong conclusions and citing more detailed evidence to support their thesis statements.
- Teachers share strategies they have found to be successful with each other and discuss ways to improve their practice. Teachers referenced the curriculum maps, unit lesson plans, and rubrics as they suggested instructional revisions such as incorporating more on-demand writing or incorporating prompts and guiding questions to encourage students to think more deeply about complex texts.
- Teachers look for a match between what students note in their self-reflection on their goals and the results of assessments. When they noticed that students were not meeting their goal of improving their performance on document-based questions they decided to use a writing workshop model more familiar in English classes to help students refine their written responses in social studies. Student work products include multiple drafts of writing pieces with feedback from peers and teachers on the early drafts.
- Teachers participate in content and grade-level inquiry teams where they ensure that lessons and tasks incorporate the instructional shifts and include rigorous questions. One team was planning for an upcoming meeting to analyze quarterly assessment data and an item skills analysis. One teacher commented that many of her students had answered a specific question incorrectly. She stated that she had to “rethink about her own teaching.”
- Ambassador teachers visit other schools in the district to learn about successful practices. They then share their experiences with teachers on their grade or content teams and through professional development sessions they facilitate. The School Survey indicates that 95% of teachers agree that they work to coordinate instruction at all grade levels increasing instructional coherence.