



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Satellite East Middle School

Middle School K301

**344 Monroe Street
Brooklyn
NY 11216**

Principal: Kim McPherson

**Date of review: May 13, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy**

The School Context

Satellite East Middle School is a middle school with 96 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 17% Asian, 65% Black, 14% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 18% English Language Learners and 29% students with disabilities. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 88.4%.

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 <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	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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills are consistently emphasized across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness so all students have access to rigorous and engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The lessons designed for the statistics unit in seventh grade math are planned to focus on the seventh grade Common Core Learning Standards that require students to understand statistics and use data from a random samples to draw inferences about a population. The school requires the student to have mastered the sixth grade standards on statistics as a prerequisite of this seventh grade unit.
- The instructional shifts are embedded in a seventh grade English Language Arts unit which requires students to cite several pieces of textual evidence to support an analysis of the text. For a lesson on the novel, *Lyddie*, students must demonstrate understanding of the working conditions in a mill and how they affected Lyddie by making connections between the events in the story and pictures of machinery from the period. Student responses must demonstrate that they have met the learning targets and can analyze the interaction of literary elements of a story or drama.
- A seventh grade science lesson requires students to follow a multi-step procedure when carrying out experiments. To demonstrate mastery of the learning objective, students must analyze the digestive system through a simulated lab activity and hypothesize what might happen if the digestive system does not interact with other systems. Student then draw conclusions on how the digestive system maintains homeostasis in a healthy body, and answer the essential question, “How do living things function to maintain a dynamic equilibrium?”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Most instructional strategies provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Most students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and are demonstrating higher-order thinking skills in student work products and responses. However, occasionally students do not have the opportunity to participate fully in class discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers help students develop analytical and research skills by supporting them as they make sense of their own learning. When students in a seventh grade science class were unsure how to identify a thick liquid in the digestive process, the teacher elicited the correct answer by having them compare a sugar cube to powdered sugar. After group discussion, the students were able to conclude that the thick liquid was “food in another form” that had been created by “acid in the digestive system.”
- Teachers utilize tiered learning to support students at all levels of performance. For example, a teacher in sixth grade math class grouped students and provided tasks geared to their level of proficiency with measures of central tendency. One group was asked to identify the mean, median, and mode of data set, while another group was asked to write about how to analyze data using measures of central tendency. Students who completed their assignments and required a further challenge were tasked with gathering and analyzing data on the participation of their classmates in extra-curricular activities. They were asked to present this information in a dot plot.
- Students work collaboratively to find solutions to new problems and to share their solutions in written, graphical, and numerical forms. In a seventh grade math class students were asked to solve problems involving addition and subtraction of positive and negative integers and to write a full explanation of their solution strategy. After a turn and talk where students were asked to share their explanations with fellow classmates, several volunteers were asked to display and present their solutions. To illustrate adding a negative number and a positive number, an English Language Learner drew 15 positive signs on the board in blue marker then drew seven negative signs over them in green. She then crossed out every pair of positive and negative signs and circled the remaining 8 positive signs which showed the answer was positive 8.
- Although engaged in challenging tasks some students were not given the opportunity to demonstrate higher order thinking skills in a social studies class. Students were asked to turn and talk but were given less than two minutes to discuss four questions. There was no other opportunity for most of them to share out their thinking on the subject matter. Only one student was called on to express his thinking with the class. His answer consisted of one sentence with no time for feedback or debate.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create and apply common assessments, rubrics, and grading policies ensuring a common understanding of performance and progress among varied student groups in all content areas.

Impact

Teachers meet and use formative assessments to inform daily instructional practices and adjustments. Students receive instruction based on their individual needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher planning is based on various common benchmark assessments given during and at the completion of units across content areas. This practice affords teachers the opportunity to adjust lessons targeting the needs of all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Teachers share these results as well as strategies for improving their instructional practice. It is a school-wide expectation that the practice for constant checks for student understanding be a routine part of every lesson. For example, across content area classes, there is the use of peer-to-peer assessment, while in classes for English Language Learners and for students with disabilities, they use the thumbs up or thumbs down strategy to show understanding.
- Teachers developed rubrics and assessment tools to foster students self-assessing their work. Students are consistently asked to explain their thinking based on a rubric. For example, a check-off style rubric was used by students in English Language Arts, math, and science classes to support higher-order thinking and student-to-student feedback. Across many observed classrooms, this check-off style rubric, as well as a *Depth of Knowledge* tool, is affixed to students' desktops for personal reference. Students consistently refer to these tools when engaged in learning, speaking, and listening activities. This practice allows teachers to make immediate adjustments to their teaching throughout lessons.
- Teacher leaders are responsible for sharing the results of all common assessments with school leadership to determine progress made on the individual, classroom, and grade level towards meeting schoolwide goals. These assessments are analyzed using four performance levels that align with New York State performance levels. For example, on English Language Arts (ELA) and math exams containing 25 questions, a student would need at least 19 correct to be considered a level two. Parents are consistently kept abreast of student performance as teachers contact them by phone or meet with them in person during parent outreach time on Tuesdays.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

High expectations are consistently communicated to the staff via the use of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* during professional development and through other forms of communication. Leadership and staff successfully communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness with families to support student progress.

Impact

Collaboration between all community stakeholders fosters ongoing communication of high expectations and accountability linked to supporting student achievement in understanding and meeting those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- During a parent meeting, parents shared how the school culture has changed in the past year. Leadership at the school encourages parents and families to have an active voice. Parents mentioned that teachers regularly call them to inform them of how their children are doing in class, remind them of upcoming exam dates, alert them of missing assignments, and inform them of when their child has outperformed expectations. Parents also spoke about the school’s online grading system, *Jupiter Grader*, where they can find information about curricula, assignments, and school-wide events.
- The principal meets with staff as a group and individually to discuss school-wide and individual expectations for classroom teaching practices. Monthly professional development in all areas of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* is provided collaboratively with staff and lists of best practices in all domains are collected and shared with staff to ensure coherence in understanding school-wide high expectations for teaching and learning.
- A review of the school’s detailed student and parent handbook, which was created collaboratively by the school leadership and is regularly reviewed every year to ensure relevance, clearly outlines all student and parent expectations and identifies resources and supports available to students and parents. The handbook also informs parents on the multiple ways they can communicate with all staff members to discuss concerns or to set up case conferences with teacher teams.
- The school community continues to work on building a culture of teaching and learning where all stakeholders are accountable in supporting students socially and academically. The school has a strong tie with after school programs, and a strong relationship with *Partnership with Children*. The school conducts weekly restorative circles in class. Guidance counselors support the high school application process by facilitating discussions of topics, such as bullying, economic resources, writing, high school transition, and planning for college are discussed.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in weekly structured collaborations where inquiry teams study student work and analyze assessment data for shared students.

Impact

The strengthened instructional capacity and improved practices of teachers, which resulted from the inquiry-based collaborations, initiated progress towards goals for groups of shared students.

Supporting Evidence

- As documented by agendas, sign-in sheets, and minutes, the teachers of Satellite Middle School meet weekly with their inquiry teams to review student work and analyze assessment data following a designated protocol. Each team determines the meeting’s objective in advance so that members come prepared with student work to be reviewed through the agreed upon lens. For example, the previous week’s inquiry team agendas showed that the science team explored how to identify a learning-centered problem; the math team worked on strategies to help students examine a wide range of data; and the ELA team focused on analyzing student work using an ATLAS-Learning student work protocol.
- Documentation from regularly scheduled inquiry team meetings shows that analyzed assessment data highlights progress for groups of shared students. For example, data evaluation of the grade 6 math and ELA benchmark assessments revealed that 75% of students in focus groups in ELA and 50% of students in focus groups in math showed progress by increasing their proficiency scores from spring to fall. Inquiry team analysis of benchmark assessments also revealed an increase in performance by groups of grade 7 students. Eighty one percent of the students in the grade 7 group improved in ELA, and 55% of the same students showed improvement in math. Fifty percent of the students in the grade 8 focus group showed progress in ELA and 33% of these students showed progress in math.
- Observation of an inquiry team emphasized the steps taken during collaborations to strengthen the instructional capacity of the teachers. After careful review and analysis of student work, members conducted a brainstorming protocol entitled, Students’ Mind, during which they listed the skills apparently mastered from the lens of the student and then possible next steps. The team concluded with identifying a teaching strategy that will support the next steps. For example, after a brainstorming session that produced the realization that students were aware of how to organize an essay and how to cite evidence, the team listed the next steps would be for students to use grade level vocabulary, elaborate on the analysis, and vary the way the analysis is introduced. An action plan and calendar for checking the effectiveness of the agreed upon focus was set.