



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

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

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**I.S. 340**

**Middle School K340**

**227 Sterling Place  
Brooklyn  
NY 11238**

**Principal: Jean Williams**

**Date of review: February 5, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

## The School Context

I.S. 340 is a middle school with 203 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 83% Black, 13% Hispanic and 1% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 15% students with disabilities. Boys account for 41% of the students enrolled and girls account for 59%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 93.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that systematically communicates a unified set of expectations for all students.

### Impact

The school successfully partners with families to support student progress toward college and career expectations. Students, including high-need subgroups, own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school provides ongoing, clear lines of verbal and written communication via the parent and student handbook, *Remind* text and email messaging to share important updates and reminders, progress reports, and parent workshops to deepen their understanding of college and career expectations for their children and empower them to help support their children in meeting or exceeding those expectations. A parent reported, “My son wants to be an author and his teacher invited him to participate in the school newsletter and he has already written three articles this year. He is being exposed to opportunities that will prepare him for college.”
- According to parents, utilizing Pupil Path has been very effective and allows families to keep abreast of how their children are progressing (or not). They are provided with their child’s grades and teacher comments which they find very useful. A parent stated, “You know what assignments are due and what’s missing. It gives us information that we might not necessarily get from our children.” Additionally, parents agreed knowing and understanding the implications of the independent reading levels for their children has assisted them in supporting reading at home by ensuring they have a quiet space and increasing time spent on reading and decreasing time on other activities that will not improve their levels.
- Students clearly articulate that they are enrolled in a showcase school and how this can improve their opportunities for being ready for high school and college. “I want to go to a specialized high school and my school is really preparing me with time management and organization of my writing”, as stated by a student. Another student reported, “The school is building us up and even the principal is teaching us math skills during her class period.” Staff members have instituted a culture of learning that provides all students with focused and clear next steps, which determine student accountability for learning goals and expectations. Students understand their Degrees of Reading Power instructional and independent reading levels and what books they need to read to improve their reading levels.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts. Teaching strategies including questioning and scaffolds consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

### Impact

Students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products. However, high quality strategic supports and extensions embedded into the curricula vary, affecting all learners ability to consistently engage in cognitively challenging tasks that demand demonstration of higher-order thinking.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school believes students learn best when they are engaged in hands-on learning, high level discussions, peer assessments, and group or individual learning when appropriate. During an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson, students worked collaboratively in literature circles, which included a discussion director, literary luminary, bridge builder, diction detective, illustrator, and researcher. The lesson's essential question was "How does character or setting develop a story?" Groupings were based on texts varying in levels of difficulty and student choice. All groups received an optional reference sheet to guide their discussions and reflection sheets. Conversely, in a science class, the learning objective was to make observations and demonstrate critical thinking by analyzing data. Students were charged with discovering the definition and demonstrating the difference between evaporation and condensation. Performance tasks in groups included a lab activity and analysis questions that were the same for all students.
- During an art lesson on famous people in American History that made a positive impact in society, students utilized technology to research their topics and used this information to create a poster advertising how to make the world a better place. The lesson included multiple entry points such as class discussion, group work and independent work options for students, digital resources using computers and internet, and questions that varied in level of difficulty. Questions included, "What are their accomplishments?" "Does a change need to be made on a grand scale to have a positive impact? Why or Why not?" and "How did they change the world for the better?" Student responses informed the production of their art projects which was to be shared in a whole class forum.
- In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class focused on a Word Generation debate, the essential questions asked, "Is today's news, information or entertainment?" "Are people in this country more interested in being entertained than in being informed about the world?" The lesson's focus words included – abandon, biased, contemporary, dramatic, and exploit. The lesson did not include questioning or activities to extend thinking for some students. Oppositely, in another ICT class focused on the same lesson, the essential questions asked varied including, "Today's news: information or entertainment? Explain your response." And "How might information from the experiment be used to justify your opinion?" Students were grouped and each assigned a word and had to describe how it could be used in a mathematical statement.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts, and make purposeful decisions to build coherence and college and career readiness for all students. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Across grades and subjects, students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities are cognitively engaged and have access to the curricula.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses Expeditionary Learning for English Language Arts (ELA) and Engage New York for math. Teachers follow the New York City Scope and Sequence for science and social studies while also incorporating document based questions. Additionally, students are exposed to Regents level tasks in math, science and global history and as a result, students in grade 8 have the opportunity to take and pass Regents exams before entering high school.
- Grade 6 ELA and science units included overviews, desired results, understandings, evidence of learning, extension activity, and essential questions. In a grade 6 math unit, modifications for English Language Learners (ELL's) and Students with Disabilities (SWD's) were included. A grade 7 social studies Understanding By Design lesson plan included tasks that provided students with choice. For example, the established goal entailed students exploring textual evidence and drawing conclusions about the impact of European exploration and the slave trade. Students were given the choice to assume the role of either a slave or a slave trader and choosing their audience.
- Based on student work and data, teachers adjusted the curricula to increase the rigor of student tasks. "Our students had to be exposed to work that is going to prepare them for high school which is why we refined the curricula", as stated by a grade 7 teacher. The curricula across grades in ELA now reflect a different end task for writing per grade whereas previously, there was the same end writing task for all grades. Grade 6 students are expected to write a persuasive essay, grade 7, an argumentative essay including an opposing view, and grade 8, involves an essay with a counter claim. The faculty also includes K-W-L charts across the content areas in their plans since prior knowledge is an area of struggle for some of their students. During a teacher meeting, a staff member reported, "This year we received common planning in addition to the Monday PD time and during the meeting we look at pre-assessment before we start planning our instructional units' data.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### **Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades.

### **Impact**

Teachers and students are provided with actionable feedback and results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school uses common assessments to determine student progress. Some of these assessments include New York City Schoolnet skills analysis of benchmark tests, periodic assessment item analysis in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Teachers used a three-year comparison of New York State ELA results to measure growth in proficiency levels for grade seven students with specific attention being focused on Students with disabilities (SWD's) and Limited English Proficiency.
- Every quarter, the school shares with parents and students quantitative and qualitative data using Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessments that explain students current ELA levels, the progress or decline that's been made, and what students need to do in order to improve. This data provides feedback to students and teachers on student achievement throughout the course of the schoolyear.
- Students use the grading policies and rubrics that are posted in classrooms to guide their work. A grade 7 grading policy included a percentage breakdown of projects/tests/quizzes, 55%, classwork and participation, 30%, and homework, 15%. Rubrics for math classes followed a progression toward mastery starting at level one and ending at level 4. A student who scored a level 4 received feedback that stated, "Well done! Both reflections are correct along with their labels are neatly done."

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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**Findings**

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that systematically analyze teacher and student work and assessment data, strengthening teacher instructional capacity and promoting the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards.

**Impact**

A focus on analysis of data and shared practice result in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners, improvement in teacher practice, and mastery of goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet regularly in grade and content areas facilitated by different teacher members. Teams clearly articulate how they implement their structured professional collaborations using protocols and other structures to strengthen teacher capacity as they create, revise, and adopt curricula to ensure effective integration of the Common Core into instruction across grades and content areas. A grade 6 science teacher commented, “I apply a lot of the literacy strategies I learn from my colleagues on this team in my science classes.” Teachers also stated the importance and relevance of using the Urban Advantage standards based program that is designed to improve student’s understanding of scientific inquiry through collaborations between urban public school systems and science cultural institutions. A teacher reported, “We’re in our second year of the Urban Advantage program and we find infusing the strategies from this curricula into the different content areas is helping our students with thinking deeply.”
- Teams effectively implement systems to monitor a variety of student data and classroom practices that inform instruction, leading to the achievement of goals for individual as well as groups of students. Teachers track students and look at a three-year comparison of student scores in addition to the Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) data. The benchmark data allows teachers to identify student gains and challenges while also informing scaffolds, accommodations and modifications needed for their students. Teacher teams have also discovered from the MOSL data, students were having challenges with inferences so we incorporated more Document Based Questions focused on inferences in our lessons.
- School leaders and teachers have built a culture of professional collaboration in which they share insights relative to the coherency of teacher pedagogy. The school serves as a Showcase School with a focus on the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) ExTRA program which is designed to improve adolescent literacy. Teachers participate and implement the practices of the MSQI program that are also in alignment with their school goals to improve literacy, in specific, writing across the grades and content areas.