



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

Ebbets Field Middle School

Middle School K352

**46 McKeever Place
Brooklyn
NY 11225**

Principal: Margaret Baker

**Date of review: March 31, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Debra Freeman**

The School Context

Ebbets Field Middle School is a middle school with 187 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 64% Black, 29% Hispanic, and 4% White students. The student body includes 18% English Language Learners and 24% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.7%.

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	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 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		
<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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that promote school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams analyze student work for students they share.

Impact

Teacher team practices strengthen teachers' instructional practice and improve progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The seventh grade inquiry team is focused on text-based evidence in student writing for a group of English Language Learners (ELLs). The team tracks student progress on Skedula, the school's online grading platform and through outcomes from Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessments, *i-Ready* diagnostics, and *myON* to measure reading growth. Similarly, the eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA) team learned after examining assessments that students cite evidence to support a claim, but do not rebut it in a counterclaim. They created a common graphic organizer and arranged for more debate in classes to support students. The teachers noted that this practice provided students with the opportunity to hear both sides of an issue prior to writing. Teachers administer weekly assessments to measure student growth in this area.
- Teachers share instructional strategies using a protocol called Bridge to Practice that commonly starts all grade team meetings. In the seventh-grade team meeting, teachers shared the impact of using varied graphic organizers to support students with reading responses. They next looked at student work for three ELLs to surface gaps in learning. Teachers independently reviewed the work, took notes on a common recording chart, and identified gaps between current and desired student thinking. This supported them in determining the implications for practice. Notably one student was able to cite evidence and demonstrate understanding of the text, but needed to learn more about text structure. The team suggested the teacher "use sentence starters to focus on answering the question, and to review the use of transitional phrases and nonfiction text structures." As their next step, they planned to design a chart as a resource for students. The average score in writing for seventh graders from the first benchmark to the second reflected a 23% improvement.
- The sixth-grade math team notes indicated they examine student work, and modify curricula to include extension activities. For example, the team decided to have students illustrate linear equations by placing themselves on a room size coordinate plane. Additionally, teachers create real world problems for students to solve while also "making sure that students write the formula before solving the problem." Teachers shared that as a result of these curricula decisions, students made gains on the next assessment ranging from 2% to 25% in ratios and proportions, and expressions and equations. Additionally, on the eighth grade math team, the process for looking at student work to surface gaps resulted in planning for a more explicit approach to transforming equations from standard form to slope-intercept form.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into content for most learners for engagement in challenging tasks, student work products, and discussions.

Impact

Although most students had opportunities to participate in discussions and engage in challenging tasks, there were missed opportunities for some students to demonstrate higher levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In an ELA class, students annotated an excerpt from Cesar Chavez’s “Commonwealth Club Address.” The lesson plan indicated the rationale for tiered groups based on *i-Ready*, unit performance, and in class observations. Therefore, one group worked independently, the second used an anchor reference chart, and a third worked with teacher support. One student wrote in the margin that the excerpt used “emotionally charged language” and another that “Chicanos need to come together and organize.” A student shared that the purpose of annotating text was to look for patterns and that “We are seeing that people were denied respect.” The student pointed to the text to support this finding. Another student noted that rhetorical questioning was a pattern and read, “How could our people believe that their children could become lawyers, doctors, and judges?” to substantiate. During the whole group share out, the discussions moved from teacher to student, and the teacher summarized students’ ideas rather than inviting response to each other.
- In an eighth-grade math class, students defined and then matched their angle definitions to illustrations. Math vocabulary, such as acute, exterior, and supplemental, was provided in Arabic, Spanish, French, and Creole. Students shared their definitions, “This is acute because it is less than 90 degrees and it is not a right angle” in small groups. The teacher invited students to build on each other’s responses, and when a misconception about the meaning of an angle surfaced, students engaged in discussion to arrive at the correct definition. Students were grouped based on a mid-module assessment given the day before that surfaced vocabulary fluency related to parallel line relationships or to connecting algebraic thinking to geometry. The vocabulary practice in small specially designed groups engaged students, particularly ELLs and students with disabilities. However, while the visual aids enabled students with disabilities and ELLs to perform at high levels, there were fewer instances of high quality extensions for high-performers.
- In a Special Education Teacher Support Services classroom students engaged in learning about the probability of a compound by participating in hands-on activities using coins or dice to anticipate prediction accuracy. Students were grouped based on *i-Ready* data, and provided with anchor charts and a method to “conquer the problem.” Additionally, several students worked on Google Map images on iPads to gain fluency in fractions. By providing this targeted support to students based on assessment data, most students were engaged in their learning independently or with a partner. One student noted, “We help each other” and another that he and his partner are “working experimentally.”

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts, and tasks emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

School leaders and teachers make purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Across most grades and subjects, all students, including ELLs, students with disabilities, and high performers, engage in higher-order skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The school implements *Expeditionary Learning*, *EngageNY*, Teachers College Writing Project, *GO Math!*, the New York City scope and sequence for social studies, and the New York State Intermediate Science Core Curriculum. All curricula documents align to the Common Core Learning Standards and focus, for example, on academic vocabulary and argumentative writing across subjects. Additionally, curricula provide ways to engage all learners from tasks tiered by reading, writing or math level, and translations for ELLs, to the extensive use of graphic organizers and iPads to prepare students' for college and career.
- In a math task, students were required to work as mathematicians to determine accurate locations to construct guardrails to address safety concerns at intersections in the city. The multi-stepped task required students to transfer their analysis of a Google Map into angle relationships in the intersections, apply the calculated relationships into effective measurements for the engineers to use, and to construct a convincing argument to justify why their calculations were correct.
- Teachers emphasize multi-stepped problem solving in tasks to provide students with multiple means for demonstrating their thinking. For example, science students calculate and record their data, identify halite's chemical bonds, return to their original predictions about why the ocean is salty, and reflect on their learning process at the close of their laboratory research. One student wrote, "This helps to boost our comprehension of what the ocean is really like." Similarly, in a math task students were asked to complete three design grids that increase in complexity. Upon completion, students analyze the sequence of transformations to explain their understanding of grid rotation, and to describe the transformations needed to create a given pattern.
- In an ELA task, students were required to write argumentative essays regarding whether or not it was easy for Atticus Finch, from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to take a stand during the time period the novel takes place. Students were guided through the process with common argument-essay writing rubrics and criteria. Task expectations included using relevant information to support claims, acknowledgment and rebuttal of the counterclaim, use of direct quotes, and students were asked to maintain an "essayist's tone." Similarly, an argumentative essay task designed specifically for students with disabilities required students to determine whether or not the main character in *Lyddie* should sign a petition against working long hours in a factory. Supports such as using a "quote sandwich" to explain relevant evidence connected to a claim, and an essay criteria format were provided as was ongoing support throughout students' writing process.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms teachers use common assessments and rubrics aligned to the school's curricula to determine student progress across grades and content areas.

Impact

The use of common assessments results in actionable feedback on student achievement and teachers using data to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- An eighth grade math teacher shared that after reviewing her students' work and assessment data from the *i-Ready* benchmark, she learned that students were having difficulty with multi-step problems. The math teacher created guided notes and checklists to help students meet each prompt in a problem, and recognized that more students were paying attention to problem details as a result. A student shared that teachers "show you what you need to do to make sure you can get 100% on your work," and all students noted that they get feedback on rubrics with next steps on all of their essays. This was also in evidence on student work products reviewed. For example, on an eighth grade science paper the teacher wrote, "You mentioned a relationship between the balloon's speed and the amount of air. Next time include the units of measure in your data."
- Teachers' ongoing examination of common assessments offered throughout the year inform adjustments to practice. For example, based on analysis of the school's *i-Ready* common assessment, and tracking students' progress toward learning targets, the use of a variety of content specific graphic organizers became an embedded practice across the school. To this end, teachers in the seventh grade created a graphic organizer to support students with writing text-based constructed responses, and a second teacher introduced "brain pop" graphic organizers for bilingual students to learn new vocabulary. After analyzing a writing assessment, a social studies teacher introduced a graphic organizer to look at the problems and influences of the confederation after the Revolutionary War to support students with their next essay. As a result, students were able to prepare and present speeches regarding the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation. Additionally, after analyzing assessment outcomes, all teachers maintain recording charts that identify current student thinking and adjustments made such as more practice in determining volume and density, and list, group and label vocabulary in science.
- Teachers use formative assessment data to inform adjustments to practice. For example, after noting uneven student engagement in math discussions, a teacher adjusted her practice and invited her students to use cubes to create a frequency table to determine probability in fractions, decimals, or percentages. Students inputted the information into an organizer to communicate step-by-step procedures shared during class discussions. Additionally, after examining student's minimal analysis of artwork, the teacher adjusted his approach. Students charted content information regarding form, process, and mood, from which they derived interpretations. This enabled the art students to experience success with interpretation. Similarly, a science teacher shared that when students were not making text- or self-connections on in-class formative assessments, she discussed this with her colleagues and realized that "We are not explicitly telling the students to do this." This resulted in the teacher doing research and creating prompts for describing what they notice about cells such as "What does this remind me of?" Students were then able to take the cited evidence and turn the project into a more meaningful piece of writing.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to the entire staff and to all families. There are supports in places for all families to connect to expectations forming a path to college and career readiness.

Impact

School leaders provide training and hold staff accountable for meeting the high expectations set, and families receive ongoing feedback on their students' progress toward the high expectations set.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates high expectations to all staff to create college and career learning conditions for all learners in the school's handbook, Monday messages, and in ongoing feedback to teachers on their practice. The weekly faculty newsletters specify that all curricula must be engaging and aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, and that all teachers must hold themselves accountable for student progress by reflecting on their practice in structured professional collaborations. During a January cabinet walk, school leaders shared strengths, wonderings, and next steps, such as preplanning and scaffolding questions, providing equity in student voice during discussions, memorializing conferencing data, or grouping students based on data. As a result of this focused feedback, most teachers now include a rationale for groupings based on *i-Ready* or MOSL performance data. Additionally, teachers have made curricula modifications, such as adjusting an *Expeditionary Learning* task after analysis of students' argumentative essays surfaced the need to focus on citing relevant evidence and establishing an effective counterclaim to strengthen students' high school-level writing. As several students agreed, "we write essays in all of our classes, math too, and our teachers give us the next grades' work to push us to a higher level."
- The school's instructional focus is to strengthen students' content comprehension through building students' background knowledge and increasing their immersion in academic vocabulary. This focus extends across subjects such as in ELA where students assessed each other's vocabulary proficiency in a "Quiz-Quiz-Trade" vocabulary activity and in math where students learn math terms necessary for problem solving. Additionally, Monday communications celebrate success such as teachers moving 33% of their students to higher reading Lexile levels after "using *myON* for only two months."
- As the principal shared, "We enlist the entire community to ensure our students' and families' needs are met." All parents receive monthly updates on academic expectations and, given that parent engagement has been a challenge, the principal utilizes consultants to provide workshops to help families understand the Common Core Learning Standard expectations. To this end, the principal hosts monthly "Chat and Chews", a venue for providing families information regarding high school readiness, and to discuss student progress toward meeting the school's high expectations. Parents are also regularly updated on their students' progress through the school's online grading platform and are trained in its use. Additionally, the format for Parent-Teacher night was redesigned so that parents met with triads of teachers, and discussed their child's portfolios. This event and the newly instituted student-led conferences, where students reflect on their academic strengths and weaknesses also strengthens their give oral presentation skills to ready them for college and career. One parent shared, "I was quite impressed."