



# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**Middle School 322**

**Middle School M322**

**4600 Broadway  
Manhattan  
NY 10040**

**Principal: Erica Zigelman**

**Date of review: March 1, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

## The School Context

Middle School 322 is a middle school with 321 students from grade six through grade eight. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 3% Black, 95% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 50% English Language Learners and 21% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.9%.

## 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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Additional Findings</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>Celebration</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:

4.2 Professional Collaborations

Rating:

Well Developed

### Findings

All teachers are engaged in collaborative inquiry-based professional development teams. Distributive leadership structures afford teachers and teacher teams the opportunity to make key decisions about teaching and learning through the analysis and revision of curriculum and student work products.

### Impact

The teacher teams have various purposes and meet frequently thus providing all teachers with opportunities to engage in shared leadership and professional collaboration resulting in improved teacher capacity and student outcomes across the school community.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet weekly in different teams including grade, curriculum planning, special education, and English Language Learners (ELL). A common protocol called Atlas is used to analyze data and student work in order to determine next pedagogical steps. In a grade team meeting, for example, teachers looked at student essays about the death penalty, using a common rubric to determine accuracy and frequency of word use, as well as the structure of the argument. Across the school, teachers are working to incorporate student acquisition of academic language through the *Word Generation* program. To that end, teachers use a rubric that incorporates word use. Teachers determined next steps to include more turn and talks, reading aloud to self, and the teaching of conjugations of verbs. A graphic organizer note catcher is utilized to gather teachers' observations, the implications for practice and reflections.
- A teacher shared, "As I am new to this school, the team meetings have helped my pedagogy grow by leaps and bounds. Since I co-plan on grades 7 and 8 the common planning allows me to be part of the team." Teachers agreed that the teacher teams provide them with opportunities to share best practices as they are implemented across a grade. A teacher stated and others agreed that when a strategy is successful for a student in one class, which is shared at meetings, she in turn adopts the use of the strategy in her class for the same student. Sharing has also allowed them to improve student mastery for groups of students and that their instructional practice has become more interdisciplinary by learning how to incorporate literacy. Further, teachers agree that their mutual respect and collegiality supports their professional growth as they learn best practices from each other.
- Distributed leadership is evident in the teacher leader team. The team meets twice a month and they turnkey information to the grade level teams. Teachers shared that because all the grades are represented on this team, they are able to plan vertically, looking at trends and patterns that can inform pedagogy and curricula in the other grades. Additionally, there is a conduit of constant information from the grade teams to the teacher leader team, sharing ideas, concerns, and feedback. Teachers believe that their voices are integral to the school.

## Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

### Findings

Although teaching strategies aligned to the school-wide beliefs about how students learn best, consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula, across a vast majority of classes, they do not yet strategically provide high-quality supports and extensions for all student work products.

### Impact

While all students, including the work of ELLs and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills, they do not yet reflect high levels of discussion and ownership.

### Supporting Evidence

- It is the school wide belief that students learn best through a “culturally relevant, engaging, hands-on, active learning experiences with real world connections.” Additionally, there is a strong focus on the delivery of instruction centered on engaging students cognitively through requiring that they think about the work, in groups, or pairs, and then checking for understanding. Administration shared that staff use Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* in addition to their definition of academic rigor.
- Multiple entry points are evident across classes but high-quality supports and extensions are not yet strategically provided in every class. In a grade 8 Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) reading and writing workshop, students were grouped based on previous small group work and provided leveled readings with graphic organizers. Upon completion of the writing, the challenge, or extensions provided were tiered for each task card stating students could prepare for a turn and talk by “Match[ing] one or more goals to the reading and writing techniques the student had identified” and “Find[ing] and annotate[ing] more text structures.” Also in a grade 8 self-contained English Language Arts (ELA) class, the extension to work on a text-specific graphic organizer, was also general and not specific or strategic. Similarly, in a grade 7-math class, the lesson plan noted that when students finished providing peer assessment in written feedback using a rubric, they could “compose their own percent problems and solve them.”
- To provide students with opportunities to share their thinking through discussion is built into the lessons to prompt engagement. In a grade 6 math class, students were having difficulty with understanding the concept of zero on the number line as it relates to negative and positive integers. The teacher retaught the concept with the aid of two videos, and a gallery walk where students shared their thinking in solving real-world problems. Similarly, in a grade 6 ICT ELA class, students had tiered readings and opportunities to turn-and-talk to discuss their ideas of author’s craft. Yet, in other classes discussion was not owned by students but instead was teacher-directed in a ping-pong fashion. In a grade 8 social studies bilingual class, as students were not provided with opportunities to discuss in the groups in which they sat, a handful of students made a few attempts to increase the level of whole group discussion, only to have it return to low-level DOK questions from the teacher. Likewise, in a grade 8 ELA class, the teacher worked to engage students in a discussion about the main idea, but the turn-and-talk was teacher-centered moving back and forth from teacher-to-student-to-teacher. While some answered teacher-directed questions, not all students were engaged, thus missing opportunities for all to own the discussion.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are planned and refined using student work and data.

### Impact

Curricula is coherent across grades and subject areas and promote college and career readiness for all students, so that individual and groups of students, including the lowest- and highest-achieving students, ELLs, and students with disabilities, have access to the curricula, performance tasks, and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers implement the *Teacher's College Reading and Writing Program (TCRWP)* in English Language Arts (ELA). Teachers have determined that in order to incorporate literacy across content areas it is important to implement aspects of the *TCRWP* that can be integrated into science and social studies. With a population of approximately 50% English Language Learners, the staff determined a need to align *TCRWP* to these students' learning needs. To support students' acquisition of academic language, the staff has adopted *Word Generation*, which is used school wide. The mathematics department uses *EngageNY*. The school has aligned their curricula to the New York City Scope and Sequence as well as *Comprehensive Math and Science Program* that supports students learning English. For students who need acceleration, staff implements Wilson's *Just Words*. *Waterford*, an intervention program is used for English is a New Language (ENL) students, students with disabilities, and struggling readers.
- Teachers' unit plans include common components, including but not limited to objective, Common Core Learning Standards, opening, mini lesson, guided practice, independent practice, share in partnerships, exit slip or assessment, and possible challenges or misconceptions. Teachers revise curricula based on the needs of students and how students perform on exit tickets or assessments. Lesson plans also include agreed upon components of big ideas, essential questions, objectives, anticipatory set, differentiation, closure, and reflection section.
- Additionally, as part of the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI) the school has intentionally incorporated academic vocabulary each month across the school's curricula for students to learn. Students read complex texts that have at least two sides to an issue so that students engage in debating the two sides. Students read the pro- and con sides and then write an essay using the academic vocabulary. Students are able to articulate the vocabulary and the process they used to incorporate the words into their work. This data and student work then becomes a part of the inquiry process, so that teachers plan and refine curricula and pedagogy based on students' needs.
- Within each of these Common Core-aligned curricula, teachers revise curricula based on data and student work. Teachers collaboratively reflect on those practices that worked and which did not lead to the refinement of academic tasks, so that all students will have opportunities to access the curricula and demonstrate their thinking.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessments</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

### Impact

These assessments provide actionable and meaningful feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement, so that all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, demonstrate increased mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses *Jupiter Grades*, an online program that provides portals for parents and students to look at grades, send or receive messages, as well as keep track of student progress. Additionally, the school uses *Schoolnet* to support the item analysis of benchmark assessments. Teachers collaborate during team meetings to track student progress and adjust curricula based on student needs, as they discuss revisions to lessons based on student work and data.
- The school uses student-friendly rubrics and checklists to support students in understanding expectations and learning how to achieve their best. One student confirmed this stating, "Normally our teachers give us student-facing rubrics and checklists and we know what we have to do to get the highest grade, and keep working on it." Students agreed that they use rubrics to help them get a better grade and to use the feedback from teachers to help them improve on the next assignment. Student work posted on bulletin boards and in files reveals grades and actionable feedback rooted in the rubric.
- Teachers and administrators shared that they use Common Core-aligned and teacher-created assessments as well as conference notes, running records, exit slips, rubrics, and checklists to determine student achievement. An assessment calendar notes the common assessments by month, the designated curriculum, the assessment titles, and the units so that teachers administer the assessments, then analyze the results together. Teachers also use the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessment three times per year to track students' growth toward reading goals. Students know both their reading levels and goals. Parents stated they support reading by ensuring that their children read the allocated time prescribed. The DRP results from the baseline assessment in the fall to the present have shown that students from across grades have increased in reading levels, demonstrating a clear portrait of student mastery. Teachers also use common assessment results to adjust their small flexible student groups for re-teaching. Additionally, teachers support students in tracking their own results in a "Reading Report" profile and *NewsELA* articles, whereby the students reflect on their DRP scores, comparison to national comprehension scores, personal reading habits, preferred reading strategy and development of their reading goal with an action plan.

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness are communicated by staff and school leaders as they partner with parents.

### Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability to support student progress toward these high expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- The administration provides consistent communication to staff regarding high expectations through the use of memos, bulletins, a staff handbook, and professional development. The professional development team meets to create the plan, which demonstrates a focus on a rotation of the different teacher teams, whole staff, and new teacher professional development. Teachers also attend trainings for *Teacher's College Reading and Writers Workshop (TCRWP)* off site, as well as have access to work with Teacher's College consultants on campus. To support the staff's implementation of these expectations, school leaders utilize a consistent cycle of observation providing actionable feedback, which then allows for updates and revisions to the professional development plan.
- Parents all agreed that the teachers consistently communicate with them regarding their children's progress toward the school's high expectations. These communications include emails, texts, phone calls, backpacked letters, grade-team newsletters, course syllabi, *Parent/Student Handbook*, and notifications through *Jupiter Grades*, an online grading program. Parents shared that they are able to contact teachers through *Jupiter Grades*, and have received direct responses that have supported their children in completing homework or projects. One parent shared that her daughter was falling behind in science, but the teacher and parent are in consistent communication and allows for quick support for her child. Parents also shared that they partner with the staff as they work together to support their children's academic growth. All parents agreed that they not only feel welcomed at the school but that everyone collaborates to help their children succeed. Students stated that they look at *Jupiter Grades* with their parents to discuss their progress and assignments to be completed. All parents agreed that it does not matter which method of communication is used, but that the partnership with staff always provides support for the achievement of their children.
- Workshops have been provided for parents to help them. For example workshops included topics such as, understanding the adolescent mind, applying to high school, and selecting a high school. Parents and students discussed attending high school tours and fairs and shared how helpful these were in their determining which high school to select based on the students' career goals. Parents stated that the workshops supported the selection process as well as how to complete the application.