



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

J.H.S. 210 Elizabeth Blackwell

Middle School Q210

**93-11 101 Avenue
Queens
NY 11416**

Principal: Bonnie Butcher

**Date of review: March 8, 2016
Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth**

The School Context

J.H.S. 210 Elizabeth Blackwell is a middle school with 1,865 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 28% Asian, 6% Black, 61% Hispanic, and 3% White students. The student body includes 12% English Language Learners and 17% students with disabilities. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.9%.

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	Additional Findings	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	Focus	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 the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts where rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in academic tasks coherently across grades and subjects.

Impact

College and career readiness skills are promoted across grade and subject areas coherently for all students to demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has adopted curriculum aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards in English Language Arts (Code X) and math (Go Math) and supports social studies and science units with content from New York State Common Core website EngageNY. The curriculums have been adjusted and revised by staff to ensure rigorous assessments and tasks are designed to meet the needs of all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
- Planning for students needs with curriculum is accomplished through the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) technique. A planning solution template is used by teachers with each unit across grades and content areas to identify methods and materials, challenges for specific students, and UDL solutions. For example, a grade 8 social studies curriculum unit planning solution document referencing America emerging as a world power, identifies a Pearl Harbor video as material to support the content. Specific students and their challenges are listed, such as attention and limited English. UDL solutions suggested are to pause the video for intermittent stops, present questions beforehand, and provide close captions during video. Additional methods and materials listed with curriculum units include vocabulary work and use of graphic organizers. UDL solutions suggest the provision of Frayer model's, sentence starters, and prompts.
- Engaging and rigorous instruction is purposefully built into curricula coherently in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners. A Universal Design for Learning supplemental curriculum guide with Danielson *Framework for Teaching* crosswalk and connection guide was generated which includes additional supports for advanced students. Several additional supports suggested are independent projects, vertical enrichment, leveling assignments, and the infusion of contemporary topics which allow for greater analysis and evaluation of materials.
- All lesson plan documents reflect the inclusion of formative assessments and checks for understanding associated with the learning objective. Assessments across several grades and content areas include daily multiple choice practice, writing on demand questions, exit tickets, multiple intelligence learning style tasks, and participation in accountable talks. Additionally, homework is written as "come prepared to discuss the work you did today."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicate high expectations for all students and offer ongoing feedback.

Impact

A system of accountability is in place for high expectations where students become prepared for the next level of their education based on the guidance and advisement they receive. However, a culture of mutual accountability has not yet been established supporting high-need subgroups ability to own their educational experience.

Supporting Evidence

- High expectations are communicated to the staff in multiple ways during the academic calendar and even prior to the first day of school. Email from the building leadership regularly states the school culture for learning must be reflective of fostering “high expectations, capacity building and empowerment.” Communications further reflect “as a team, working together with a common goal of providing challenging and engaging academic instruction to meet the needs of all students [we] will enable our students to excel.” Additional emails advance the requisite to remain “vigilant and continue to instruct students using highly effective practices.” However, the primary source of communicating expectations to staff appears to reflect one from leadership and not necessarily a multifaceted mutual account.
- According to some staff, they have an inherent belief that “all kids can learn and have high expectations” for students to learn about their next level of education or life after graduation. However, most students were not clearly able to articulate how the school is preparing them for such events. Several were aware of opportunities to visit colleges, although only one student shared he took advantage of that opportunity. Additionally, students shared if they are struggling with their work, they are able to receive extra work or extra credit from their teacher. Students did acknowledge if they miss three homework’s or one assignment they must attend the SOS program. However, several of the students felt no supports are in place during that time, rather they are required to sit their quietly and “just make up the homework.”
- Across grades and content areas students are required to complete student reflection sheets and goal sheets. Students in English Language Arts are provided a student reflection sheet where they record their New York State assessment leveled scores, scaled score, and how the points compare to their prior year’s results. Additionally, they write how they feel about it and suggest a goal for the current year’s assessment with three specific areas for them to focus their improvement. In art, students develop three goals on a planning worksheet with each respective project. In social studies, goals are generated by the student and revisited each quarter, although a review of most student goal forms showed no teacher comments in the space provided, consequently, there are missed opportunities to support student’s mutual understanding of how to achieve their goal successfully.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Proficient
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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*.

Impact

Teaching and focus in the instructional shifts yield student work products and discussions at high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Group work was integrated into all classrooms visited. Science students worked with a partner to measure muscle fatigue, math students collaborated on both word problems and numerical equations, English Language Arts classes arranged all seats in small groups for discussions, and groups of students visited stations by circulating the room during social studies.
- The instructional focus is centered on the alignment of formative assessments to standards to ensure progress monitoring of student learning. Throughout most classes, teachers conferred with students individually, in small groups, and through the use of questions. Students were asked a variety of questions according to Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* chart, and in one class a wheel question was used by the teacher to assess students' understanding. The teacher spun the wall mounted wheel which and a student read it to his class so they could determine if they could answer: "Can (you) relate this to another subject?" Students piggybacked their responses off one another. Students were observed in Socratic discussions throughout many classes although one teacher referred to their techniques with a variety of pedagogical terms such as piggybacking or pop-corning.
- A school-wide instructional belief is to have teachers serve as classroom facilitators and support the students in rich accountable discussions. An observation of a social studies class offered students the chance to participate in a lively all-inclusive dialogue about the competing views of power and morality with global conflict as it relates to World War II and the Holocaust. Students provided specific detailed evidence in discussion with references to their sources and personal narrative where appropriate. One student stated "they all have numbers and were treated like cattle, we are humans and shouldn't be treated like codes." In another classroom, students expressed they "like to learn what happened in the past," and "might get higher reading levels and more intense questions" to answer in their group. An Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class offered students a choice of questions to answer based on previously administered benchmarks. Students were able to articulate since they were the higher performing group, "we can talk out our work" and help one another.
- Students referred to their resources such as text and images for evidence when supporting their answers coherently across grades and content areas. Specific reference to paragraphs, station images, text-sources, or stations visited was stated when students shared out their responses. Students confirmed they always refer to their resources when generating an answer for written work samples or group discussions.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. The school uses common assessments to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Actionable feedback is provided to teachers and students regarding student's achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Pre- and post-benchmark assessments are commonly administered to students across grades and contents. Staff analyzes student data, identify standards that students need to master and develop strategies using Universal Design for Learning techniques to modify their instruction practices. Additionally, tools for formative assessment, techniques to check for understanding, and processing activities are provided to teachers to use to unpack the Common Core Learning Standards uniformly across the content areas. Baseline data showed the students have improved their ability to infer according to building leaders. Additionally, teachers are given significant time weekly to reflect on data and identify student misconceptions. A data tracking form is used to record a student's grade equivalency and if they are below, on target, or above. The next level to test with is also identified. Levels are based on Teacher's College Reading and Writing Project benchmark levels.
- Ongoing checks for understanding are conducted by the teachers throughout their instruction coherently throughout the grades and content areas. A checks for understanding form is used by teachers consistently and uniformly to record the date and specific skill or standard being taught during the lesson. The teacher collects information throughout the instructional period and identifies if the student performed at a level 1, 2, 3, or 4, where level 1 represents well-below and level 4 represents excels in the standard or skill for the grade level. Teachers use this information to monitor student progress and reteach concepts immediately.
- Teachers also use their assessments and checks for understanding template forms to identify future strategies for instruction with each student per skill or standard. Future strategies for instruction include the use of graphic organizers, practice of specific formulas/problems, sharing of online animated content videos, and assignment of review book questions.
- Baseline and benchmark graphs are developed highlighting English Language Arts and math pre- and post-test comparisons for all grades and classes of students, including English as a New Learner students. Data charts reveal increased mastery in all classes, except one section from September 2015 to January 2016. The average baseline to benchmark increase was more than ten percentage points.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students.

Impact

Inquiry practices engaged by teachers and teams of teachers strengthen instructional capacity and typically result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- During an observation of an English Language Arts team meeting, teachers followed a data analysis and reflection protocol. Teachers reflected on teaching and learning after benchmark assessment data analysis revealed instructional gaps (teachers) and learning gaps (students). Discussion considered if teachers are teaching the content with appropriate emphasis, depth, and recognition of pre-requisite concepts; the use of best pedagogical practices and research-based approaches; and is instruction accessible to all groups of students? Additionally, potential learning gaps were identified and considered how significant the skill and gap is, and how prominent or widespread is the gap across students? Lastly, new instructional strategies were identified for implementation during instructional time which would impact students in relation to their individual academic needs.
- Teachers shared specific potential instructional gaps from classes and attempts to modify instruction. A special education teacher modeled the use of sentence starters and provided them to every student in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class following a realization that the content in the Code X curriculum was too hard for the majority of students. Another special education teacher began a strategy of teacher verses student with several self-contained classes through the implementation of red and green checks, since she “found they can’t read the text alone [although] they can analyze the text in whole group.” A teacher who previously taught at the secondary level, suggested “we talk about something as a whole building we could all do and we really scaffold it... also motivation is something I am struggling with, in groups the students wouldn’t really talk to one another. I am using global café, when they rotate and have a historian, and they are now more focused because they get to move around, and the two times I have done it, they feel like they learn more by rotating than through lecture...I am seeing a change already.”
- Throughout the school, all teachers are members of teacher teams which include collaborative content groups, data analysis groups, lead teacher groups, and model teacher groups. Groups of teachers also work with teachers from other middle schools to share ideas, strategies, and materials. Teams consistently collaborate to analyze summative and interim assessment results so revisions are made to ensure there is a common understanding about what is taught and why it is taught. Staff believes the impact of their inquiry work offers them an opportunity to develop “best practices and share out ideas and resources.” Additionally, teachers shared they have “added many supplemental [resources] and are changing what we provide...for curriculum design.”