



# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**New MS at Q314**

**Middle School Q358**

**88-08 164<sup>TH</sup> Street  
Queens  
NY11432**

**Principal: Brendan Mims**

**Date of review: May 6, 2106  
Lead Reviewer: Deborah Burnett-Worthy**

## The School Context

New MS at Q314 is a middle school with 127 students in grade 6. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 23% Asian, 38% Black, 32% Hispanic, and 2% White students. The student body includes 19% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 is not available due to new school status.

## 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>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 consistently communicate a shared set of high expectations to staff, students and families that promote a positive culture for learning.

### Impact

These communications result in a culture of mutual accountability for the staff, students and parents who all support student progress towards high school, college and career readiness and preparation for the next academic level.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders establish communication of high expectations to the staff through the staff handbook, which declares that all students will achieve high levels of academic success. All teachers are integral to maximizing student achievement through high quality instruction. The universally shared instructional focus which states, “If teachers design lessons and deliver instruction that incorporates ‘purposeful writing’ activities and opportunities for ‘passionate speaking’ then students will be able to make their thinking and reasoning visible through writing, speaking and other work products.” The documented expectation of instruction, received by all faculty members discloses that, “It is an expectation that all teachers will incorporate and implement classroom practices that are reflective of best practices.” Evidence of these practices include, unpacking mastery targets, differentiation with supports and extensions for identified students, challenging tasks, and high levels of student engagement and rigor.
- School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness by holding parent workshops that invite families to be partners in student success. The professional development workshop for parents encouraged parents to be partners in their child’s learning. This was further supported by a family workshop in college and career readiness. Interviewed parents revealed that they felt better equipped to support their children because of these workshops and learning opportunities. Parents were able to speak knowledgeably about the Common Core Learning Standards and “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” book which is the foundation for the core values of high expectation for their children. Parents are supporting their children with college and career readiness by knowing, understanding and promoting these college ready practices at home.
- High expectations are communicated to students during their advisory period where college ready practices are shared and monitored by their mentor. Student lead conferences, where students are responsible for owning and setting an action plan for their academic progress is one of these practices. “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” are another set of important communications. Interviewed students were able to speak to these habits. Setting goals and being specifically aware of their learning targets and Lexile number (reading level) are demonstrations that they understand expectations are high. One student offered, “I set my goals and raised my grade in ELA from a 70% to 80%. I know 70 is passing but it was not passing to me.” The student pledge, which is said daily, includes additional communications of high expectations. Two observed state that students should be deep critical thinkers and effective and efficient problem solvers.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across many classrooms and subject areas, teaching strategies include access to the curricula for all learners. Students participate in challenging tasks and discussions.

### Impact

A high level of participation and higher order thinking is demonstrated by a variety of learners in many classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- Student discussion of how to solve a multi-step geometry problem demonstrates higher order thinking as required for alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards. The teacher challenged, “Is there anything we could have done over the past few days that could help us find the area of this parallelogram, a shape that we have zero experience with?” Student discussions resulted in students coming to the conclusion that the new shape should be broken down into triangles and squares, shapes with which they do have experience finding the area.
- An English Language Arts teacher instructed students who called her over to assist them with a peer-editing task, “You have a really strong hook and she has really strong sentences. That’s why you were paired together. Don’t depend on me. You two can help each other.” Students then collaborated for 6 minutes then began to work on the body of their essays.
- In a blending of science and computer technology, grade 6 students were placed in pairs and then tasked with a coding assignment. With one student as the navigator, making the scientific decisions and the other as the driver, coding the computer program and making the technical decisions, students created a virtual habitat for predator and prey. After selecting the predator and the prey and then deciding on details of the environment in which they would encounter one another, the students who were the navigators switched places with the students who were the drivers. The trading of responsibilities ensured that all students were exposed to skill building activities in both science and computer technology. The lion and the deer were one group’s selection. A team discussion of what that relationship would look like was had before final coding decisions were made.
- Although a social studies class had a rigorous and creative vocabulary presentation, and a math class pushed students thinking with required use of their problem solving skills, both teachers missed opportunities for students to fully experience the challenge when student notetaking was not suggested or monitored during critical portions of each class. There were also students, two in the social studies class and one in the math class, who did not achieve the learning objective. Their lack of understanding went undetected by both teachers.

## 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 (CCLS) and strategically integrate instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and embedded across grades and subjects.

### Impact

The schools use of engaging and rigorous curricula for all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, result in access to coherent instruction where students demonstrate their thinking across grades and subject areas while promoting college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- Reviewed curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans reflect grade level content, targeted standards, essential questions, related tasks, checks for understanding and school wide assessments. For example, the sixth grade maps include a balance of informational and literary text, citation of textual evidence, multistep word problems and consistent use of academic vocabulary.
- Text-based answers are an integral part of all curricula. Students are consistently required to support their responses with evidence in writing supported by text. There are specific writing tasks that call for the citing of text in the math, English science and social studies and dance class. For example, a science unit plan requires students to read a news article about the extent of damage caused by a hurricane and cite specific evidence in the article that supports the author's claims of damage (cost of repairs, loss of life, habitat damage, etc.) An English Language Arts unit on the book *Tuck Everlasting*, asks students to write a literary analysis essay citing evidence from the novel to support their conclusions. A dance unit plan on choreography requires students to answer the essential questions: "How do we turn movement into choreography?" and "What are the tools choreographers use?" Students must write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant cited evidence.
- All curriculum maps, unit plans and lesson plans are designed to align with the Common Core Learning Standards and Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) alignment tool. Essential questions, classroom tasks and checks for understanding all show evidence of reference to the DOK tool. Throughout a math unit plan on geometry, students are consistently asked to solve problems then use their level 3 DOK skills to explain how and why they arrived at their answer. Each request for their strategic thinking is accompanied by a writing space that can accommodate at least a paragraph. School leaders have also included Hess' *Cognitive Rigor Matrix & Curricular Examples* in the construction of school curricula.

Supports for English language learners and Special Education students and extensions for advanced students are included in lesson plans in all content areas including dance. A lesson plan for dance class provides visual supports for English Language Learners (ELL) and smaller group support for students with disabilities. A science unit provides a video to support the textbook reading for ELL students and a reflection checklist to support I.E.P. goals for students with disabilities.

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

Across classrooms, teachers create assessments, rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teaching practices reflect ongoing checks for understanding.

### **Impact**

Students and teachers are provided with actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Effective adjustments are made to lesson plans so that all learning are met.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- The school grading policy states that multiple measures of academic gains and social emotional growth are believed to be best practice. The policy also states that reflection is an integral part of learning so student reflection and actionable feedback are also considered core best practices.
- Teachers use multiple tools to assess student learning. A monitoring group progress form was used to assess student progress on finding the area of a parallelogram. It was documented by the teacher that six students mastered the skill without any teacher intervention. The pace of the next activity was adjusted to accommodate the fifteen students that needed more time with the concept. At the end of the lesson a copy of the monitoring tool revealed only two of the twenty-one students did not reach the learning objective at the conclusion of the lesson and would require additional support to master the concept. This tool was also observed in an ELA, Dance and Science class.
- Student work with completed rubrics and actionable feedback from the teacher and self-reflection from students was on display across classrooms. Teachers provided "glows", positive feedback statements acknowledging academic strengths and accomplishments and "grows", gentle critiques offering next steps so students can improve their next academic attempt at the targeted academic skill. The "glow", "You have two pieces of evidence to support how you did not meet learning target." and the "grow", "Add another piece of evidence to support how you have now met learning target." were attached to a student reflection on his progress with math sequences and expressions. The student commented; "I feel like I met this learning target because I already know how to use the order of operations so it was easy but this time we had to substitute the variable with a number."

<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**

Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share. Distributive leadership opportunities for teachers are an embedded school policy.

### **Impact**

Inquiry work results in shared improvement in teaching practice and mastery of goals for groups of students. Teacher voices play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- An observed teacher inquiry team discovered that giving grows and not detailed glows to a student resulted in him discarding the part of his essay he should have kept in his re-write. One teacher remarked, "We didn't give him good feedback telling him what to keep. He got rid of good details." That team decided that their next steps would be to adjust their actionable feedback method to include positive reinforcement to make students aware of their own progress along with actionable feedback to facilitate next steps.
- Another inquiry team closely looked at the four criteria for success of a given task and normed their thinking as teachers closely reviewed student work to check for progress.
- A third inquiry team reviewed student data collected from school based assessments given in November and February with a final assessment pending in June. They also reviewed data from *Achieve 3000* assessment software. They focused on strategies to challenge the students who were ready for enrichment without leaving the struggling students behind.
- The distributive leadership structures in place at this school supported the teacher voices who established the acronym I.C.E. (introduce your quotation, cite your quotation, explain your quotation) as a schoolwide policy. It was on display in every classroom and in the hallways and could be found across curricula.