



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

M.S. X101 Edward R. Byrne

Middle School X101

**2750 Lafayette Avenue
Bronx
NY 10465**

Principal: Jared Rosoff

**Date of review: December 9, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

The School Context

M.S. X101 Edward R. Byrne is a middle school with 495 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 14% Asian, 10% Black, 56% Hispanic, and 20% White students. The student body includes 1% English Language Learners and 22% students with disabilities. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.8%.

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 <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	Focus	Developing
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	Developing
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	Celebration	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:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations including the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school consistently communicates high expectations to families and provides on-going feedback on student progress connected to a path to college and career.

Impact

School Leaders consistently communicate high expectations for student achievement connected to career and college readiness to all staff members and families.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's focus on Danielson 3B, Questioning and Discussion, 3C, Engaging Students in Learning, is reflected in teacher observations. For example, a review of teacher observations demonstrates the following feedback to the teachers, "While you reviewed the different parts of figurative language with the students, going forward try having the students come up with examples in groups. This will provide opportunities for student to have their voice be heard."
- School leaders have embraced students with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP) and communicate high expectations for these students by holding teachers accountable for providing them with rigorous work and mainstreaming these students into general education classes as appropriate. As a support, school leaders have provided extensive professional development to teachers addressing IEP goals and differentiation strategies to ensure that students are involved in critical thinking and are becoming career and college ready.
- In a parent meeting, parents stated that the school had high expectations for students and prepared students for their next level. Parents stated that the school provided students with Regents classes so that students would be able to earn high school credit. They also spoke about Jupiter Grades and how this online program allows them to follow their student's grades and progress. A review of Jupiter Grades shows that 92% of parents use this to follow student performance. Almost all the parents shared that Jupiter Grades allowed them to have constant communication with teachers through emails and texts. Many parents stated that the average wait time to get a response from a teacher was 15 minutes. Additionally, Jupiter Grades allowed them to know about the school's focus on vocabulary, reading and the current units of study. One parent spoke about how knowing that her daughter was involved in a unit on Genetic Engineering provided her and her daughter with an opportunity to extend the learning by engaging in independent research on genetics. One parent stated that although her child is in grade 6, she is already being exposed to high school preparation through classroom discussions. Another parent stated that she was currently in college and saw the strong connection and alignment to the work that students were doing at the school such as reading various texts, developing an opinion and what she was doing in college.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and how students learn best.

Impact

The focus on certain aspects of the instructional shifts in isolation has hindered the ability to have students engage in meaningful work products that reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades ELA teachers were observed implementing, the first unit on imagery in a new ELA program. In a Grade 7 ELA class reading Gary Soto, students were asked to identify figurative language patterned after poetry they had just read. While the images lent themselves to ample discussion and connection to the poem previously read, the task simply asked students to code the text in 3 different colors by sense. This reduced the conversation to procedural clarifications.
- In a Grade 8 ELA class students sat in small groups while one student had a marker to create a bubble chart listing examples of imagery for the story they had just read. One table had read Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" and they were engaged in a lively conversation about the absurdity of a government mandating that everyone be equal. When asked why they were engaged in this discussion, the students stopped the discussion and returned to merely listing imagery words in the bubble charts.
- In a Grade 8 science class students were reading a social science article titled, "Does Rap music have a negative impact on youth?" This article was part of the Word Generation Program that focuses on increasing academic vocabulary through the introduction of weekly vocabulary words. The article was questioning if there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that Rap music contributed to a negative influence on students and if the research yielded a valid conclusion. The teacher engaged students briefly in a read aloud. Many student hands were raised in anticipation of sharing and the teacher allowed one or two students to give opinions on the subject before stopping the conversation and going into a standard vocabulary lesson. Students had to write a sentence for the vocabulary word under the writing prompt on the accompanying student worksheet. A review of student worksheets revealed that under the prompt "Come up with data that they could use to demonstrate that rap music contributes to school violence", a student had written, "The hardness of the mineral contributes to the identification of it. The color of a mineral isn't the most sufficient way to identify it."

Additional Findings

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, collaborated inquiry promoting student achievement by analyzing assessment data for students whom they are focused.

Impact

The collaborative inquiry process of analyzing student work for groups of student has begun to develop coherence across the grades, strengthen student achievement and improve teachers' instructional practice.

Supporting Evidence

- Through the analysis of student work products, teacher teams have realized that incoming students have a solid knowledge of common core mathematics. As a result, math teacher teams worked on compacting the curriculum to allow for more time to focus on the application and interpretation of mathematical concepts such as algebraic expression and planning for increased opportunities to strengthen math concepts that will spiral to the next grade. As a result this has helped build coherence in mathematical practice across the grades.
- Teacher teams spoke thoughtfully about their collaboration with Special Education teachers and looking at the work of students that they share. They stated that as a result of this collaboration, they were able to understand ways that they could both assess students using the school curriculum and how to differentiate to ensure that students were exposed to rigorous materials. In particular, they spoke about the difference that Word Generation is making in improved use of academic by students with (Individualized Education Plans) IEPs. They also shared that working with the school dean has allowed them to be able to work on developing a student academic mindset that serves to regulate behaviors that would have taken students off task. As a result of these collaborations teachers have seen progress in improved vocabulary development and increased self-regulation as well as understanding how their own instructional practice in working with IEP students has contributed to student achievement.
- Teachers participate in teacher team meetings at a neighboring school. Working on the same curriculum has caused them to be more reflective about their practice and to think about additional methods to use to infuse more rigor into their lessons which would promote deeper student thinking. One teacher stated, "Just making the connection that a tree might represent the tree of life is not enough. We have to push the thinking and ask why and look at the way that the writing is coming together towards analysis not just connection."

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms teachers use and create rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. There is inconsistent use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact

These loosely aligned rubrics provide limited to students. The limited use of checks for understanding prevents teachers to make critical adjustments during lessons to assure that all students' learning needs are met.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms teachers inconsistently used checks for understanding and as a result there are missed opportunities to make effective adjustments. For example, in a Math lesson on improper fractions, students were working in pairs converting improper fractions into mix numbers. Students demonstrated various degrees of understanding in the lesson. While the teacher did walk around to ensure that students were engaged, there was no way of gauging student mastery. Students who were struggling were not provided with opportunities to have their misunderstanding addressed.
- Students in ELA classrooms had limited tools for self-assessment and rubrics due to the implementation of a new curriculum that the school is trying to implement. The lack of a rubric or checklist outlining the requirement of the task created ambiguity for students around the work. For example, students were to complete an organizer comparing several texts such as The Pearl, "The Lottery" and the short story "Harrison Bergeron". They were observed struggling to complete the task with no teacher intervention. Some students went back to their notebooks to a similar task and used it as a rubric to guide their work. When asked why they were using a worksheet from another task, a student replied, "I am not sure what I am supposed to do and there is no rubric. I remembered that this worksheet asked me to do something like this and I decided that I would use it to help me get my work done."
- In an English Language Arts class students were struggling on a task focused on imagery. Although the struggle seemed to be related to comprehending imagery, a closer look at the work demonstrated that the students were correctly identifying imagery. Since there was no check for understanding, the teacher did not realize that students were having trouble connecting the idea of sensory details with the concept of imagery not identifying imagery. This lack of ongoing assessment prevented the appropriate adjustment to the lesson.
- In a science class student work products included an essay on genetics and heredity. The task asked students to include genetic information on physical characteristics of organisms, to discuss the DNA molecules and the four different types of nucleotides that link into a chain. A review of the essays revealed generalized feedback such as "Great intro" and "links ideas". An accompanying rubric grouped feedback into two categories "Voice, and Grammar. This generic rubric was not aligned to the content and hindered the ability to assess student understanding of the scientific content-concepts being addressed. Furthermore, the rubric limited the adjustment of instruction to meet all learning needs.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core standards by integrating instructional shifts and using student work to refine curricula.

Impact

The focus on the instructional shifts is resulting in instructional coherence across the grades. The use of refined curricula is providing opportunities for all students to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The school made a purposeful decision to adopt Core Reading as a new reading program because the Expeditionary program did not meet the needs of the school. This new program addresses the challenge of having students involved in greater amounts of reading and learning to write using various sources, one of the instructional shifts. This program builds coherence across the grades by having students work on the same literary device or skill but using different, grade appropriate text. As a result, students in Grade 7 focusing on imagery read Gary Soto’s “Seventh Grade”; Langston Hughes, “Thank you, Ma’am” and Emily Dickinson’s “If I can stop one Heart from Breaking” culminating in an expository essay and an argumentative response. In grade 8 students read Kurt Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron”, Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” and excerpts from John Steinbeck’s The Pearl while focusing on imagery along with word choice and author’s intention to write a comparison essay focused on central ideas.
- As a result of analyzing the Math Regents, the teachers identified math concepts that needed to be addressed and spiraled across all the grades. The school instituted a problem of the day focusing on these particular skills to ensure increased student performance on grade assessments and the Regents. The problem of the day is used across all grades beginning with grade 6. This has allowed the school not only to calibrate mathematical practices towards the Regents, but as the concepts are refined it is resulting in coherence across the grades.
- Teachers use a template for planning which combines Understanding by Design cross-referenced with Danielson. For example, the template has a box for teachers to list “Key concepts, Content and Skills which also indicates “Component 1e Designing Coherent Instruction. Additionally teachers list the academic words for the lesson reflecting the school goal of vocabulary development. Plans identify the essential question and the different types of scaffolding which will be included. A review of this template revealed multiple changes as teachers made adjustments such as, grouping and re-teaching, as a result of the analysis of student work.