



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

I.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade

Middle School X117

**1865 Morris Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Delise Jones

**Date of review: April 20, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

The School Context

I.S. 117 Joseph H. Wade is a middle school with 578 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 2% Asian, 17% Black, 80% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 40% English Language Learners and 26% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 88.9%.

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	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 to the entire staff and families connected to a path to college and career readiness to support student progress toward those expectations.

Impact

As a result, there is a system of accountability in place for teachers and staff. Structures are in place to engage families in supporting their students' progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate expectations to teachers and staff through formal and informal conversations. The school has a teacher handbook that outlines expectations for teachers. Communication also happens through emails and *The Wade Times*, a monthly newsletter aligned to the school mission and vision that outlines school expectations. This newsletter also includes findings from observational rounds, inter-visitations and share outs from the instructional cabinet. Additionally, school leaders meet with teachers individually to identify professional goals and have individual conversations.
- The principal shared that 69% of the students in the school fall into special populations and as such her school focus is on ensuring that students build academic vocabulary that allows them to engage in intellectual discussion and make their thinking visible. Feedback to teachers is aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and provides next steps focused on student engagement and reinforcing vocabulary.
- In a teacher team meeting, teachers shared that vocabulary and engagement was a schoolwide focus. This was seen in classrooms that have charts focusing on academic vocabulary for the unit as well as in hallways where academic words and their definition were posted in both English and Spanish.
- Parents shared that they receive a parent handbook and also the school newsletter, which lists opportunities for academic intervention and information on the school focus. They stated that the school is focusing on discussion and the use of academic vocabulary. They stated that they have seen this focus in student writing and it is also posted around the school. Parents shared that one of the new tools that keeps them apprised of student academic progress is *Jupiter Grades*. Parents stated that they are able to see student grades on classwork, assignments, projects and homework. They also stated that this online program allows them to have immediate access to teachers. Additionally, the parents spoke about monthly assemblies that focus on scholarship, including the honor roll. They shared that there is a parent survey that they receive where they can provide the school with information on the kinds of workshops that they need.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking.

Impact

As a result, there are uneven levels of student engagement and demonstration of thinking varies across classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- While scaffolds such as graphic organizers, videos, and hands-on materials are evident in some classrooms, they are not always connected to the end task or end understanding. For example, in one case, the connection about how the information recorded in a graphic organizer would form the notes for a formal essay was not made explicit. In addition, activities were driven by the goal of the end product, missing opportunities to engage students in discussions that deepened their conceptual understanding of the topics. For example, in one lab class, students were engaged in an activity where they used water, dish soap, and food coloring to create a tornado in a bottle. While the teacher began by having students think about why weathering a tornado in a car was not a good idea, there was no discussion about the forces at play in a tornado. Students quickly jumped into the activity and when asked, students spoke about volcanoes instead of tornados. Students did not understand that the agitation of the water in the bottle represented the centrifugal forces in the vortex of the tornado. The teacher did not connect the lab to the actual phenomenon. Many English Language Learners (ELLs) did not understand the directions and were asking questions about the directions.
- In a class studying the systems in the human body, students sat in small groups completing graphic organizers that asked factual questions by copying information from a textbook or a computer screen. In another group, the students worked on unscrambling words. Each group worked on a different system. A group of students working on the endocrine system shared that all fetuses are initially female and then become male. They stated that this is because of estrogen. They then asked the principal why females menstruate and men do not, demonstrating that although they were reading about how hormones control sexual reproduction, they were unable to understand the material.
- Classroom conversations generally focus on students repeating information rather than being able to justify or explain the thinking or make connections. In one English class the teacher modeled the use of an organizer listing setting, effect, and textual evidence to engage students in understanding how the setting has an impact on the plot of the story. The teacher began to model with the story *A Long Walk to Water*. Students were observed in small groups summarizing the story and sharing how the civil war in Southern Sudan created the events in the story. However, in a social studies class, students came up to a podium to present ideas for and against Roosevelt's New Deal Program. The students had notes that included some notes from reading excerpts that the teacher had provided as handouts and a video they had watched. When students came up to the podium, they simply read the bullets that they recorded without connecting or explaining the ideas. Several students came up and stated that Roosevelt had built parkways and that poor people get social security.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school's curricula. Teacher assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Students receive limited actionable feedback and checks for understanding do not always lead to effective adjustments to instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Students in the school struggle with academic language but do not yet receive consistent or actionable teacher feedback. In most cases the language comes directly from the rubric, limiting the students' ability to understand the feedback and be able to use it as a next step for demonstrating mastery towards the learning goals. This was seen in student work in a math class where students were writing algebraic expressions. The feedback to the student stated, "You have shown complete understanding of the math involved to ascertain the solution." Another next step in this class stated "You could give values to the variables to demonstrate the equivalence." Similarly, in an English class, students received feedback such as, "There is evidence of organization, you maintain a formal style, and you provide a concluding paragraph." This lack of clarity in language and next steps hinders student understanding and progress.
- Many of the rubrics showed criteria circled highlighted with no teacher feedback. In places where the teacher provided rubric-aligned feedback, the feedback was about spelling, grammar or conventions and not about analysis, explanation or connections to textual evidence. In a student meeting, students were unable to state a next step for improving the quality of their work other than to cite grammar and punctuation or to add more details.
- In many of the classrooms teachers walked from group to group and spoke with students; however, there was no recording of student questions or misunderstandings. Laminated, colored cards with terms aligned to Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* were seen across most classrooms. This scaffold is used by students as both a check for understanding and as way of engaging in student discussion. The blue card states "I understand the steps, process or task and I can answer the essential question." The red card states, "I am struggling to understand the task, statement or process. Can someone repeat it, summarize it for me?" These cards have the same statement in Spanish on the reverse. While these were observed in classes, students rarely have the opportunity to use them. Teachers asked students to hold up the cards; however, students were not able to explain their learning. After students held up the cards, instruction generally continued without adjustment.

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 academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

Curricula and tasks across grades and content areas ensure that students develop higher-order skills that promote career and college readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses many Common Core-aligned curricula and makes purposeful decisions to build coherence. For example, the school uses *Expeditionary Learning* as its literature program. This program focuses on short response writing, so the school supplements the writing program with the *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project*. To support struggling learners with extra strategies, the school uses *Code X*. In order to promote class discussion as well as the shift of citing evidence and using close reading strategies, the school has also adopted *Junior Great Books*.
- The school uses *EngageNY* to supplement its *Math in Focus* curriculum. It also follows the NY State curriculum for the Integrated Algebra and for Living Environment Regents. The school follows the NYC Scope and Sequence in science and social studies.
- Tasks across grades and subjects emphasize rigor. For example, a unit on World War I culminates in writing a five-paragraph informative essay where students explain how conflicts and tension in Europe lead to the war. In a science task focusing on pollution, students write an essay where they are required to cite several sources on pollution to explain the possible extinction of fish. In a grade 8 health unit students debate whether there is a role for steroids in competitive sports. In grade 6 English Language Arts (ELA), students read the novel *Bud, not Buddy* to examine author's craft.
- Across math classrooms, students are engaged in justifying their answers when solving problems. For example, in an algebra course, students had to show their work, graph linear inequalities with two variables, and answer the essential question of "How is a linear inequality in two variables like a linear equation in two variables?"

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. Distributed leadership structures are in place so that teachers have built leadership capacity.

Impact

Cross-functional professional collaborations across the school ensure that teachers have a voice in decisions that affect students and can focus on student data to meet school goals.

Supporting Evidence

- In one teacher team meeting, teachers were examining the various assessments they use and questioning which yielded the best data. Teachers stated that they had been focused on summative data, but are now rethinking the use of formative data to drive instruction. The conversation included how to merge the many data points they had so that they would yield a complete picture of student mastery. The most recent district benchmark exam shows an increase in student mastery in ELA in grade 6 from 30% to 34%, in grade 7 from 34% to 40% and in grade 8 from 33% to 38%.
- Cross-functional teams comprised of teachers and support staff such as guidance counselors and attendance teachers meet frequently to monitor the progress of students who are at risk. Teams meet to examine student work and provide targeted academic supports and intervention to students who are persistently underperforming.
- Teacher leaders have the opportunity to join school leaders in class observations so that they can understand the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Currently the school leaders are focused on class discussion and student engagement. Teacher leaders turn-key the findings of these observations with other teachers. Together they set up teacher observation schedules where they visit each other to calibrate and norm their practice. Teachers give the teacher visited cool and warm feedback as part of the school norming. Teachers then select next steps aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* as goals for their practice. As a result, the most recent District benchmark exam shows an increase in student mastery in math in grade 6 from 29% to 37%, in grade 7 from 36% to 40% and in grade 8 from 29% to 35%.
- School leaders administer a professional learning survey where teachers self-select their professional development based on their preferences and professional goals. Teachers are also able to attend outside professional development that is connected to their professional or school goals. Teachers attend professional development and then come back to the school and meet with the teacher leads to turn-key the information and, for teachers who decide to practice some of the new learning, to open up their classrooms for others to visit. Teachers are especially interested in academic intervention and look for workshops on this topic to attend and bring back to the school.