



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

School of Performing Arts

Middle School X217

**977 Fox Street
Bronx
NY 10459**

Principal: Maiysha Etienne

**Date of review: March 8, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Buffie Simmons**

The School Context

School of Performing Arts is a middle school with 314 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 3% Asian, 29% Black, 67% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 21% English Language Learners and 27% students with disabilities. Boys account for 42% of the students enrolled and girls account for 58%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 90.0%.

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 Framework for Teaching, 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 ongoing 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 whole staff connected to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. The school consistently communicates expectations and offers feedback to families to help parents understand their child's progress.

Impact

Teachers receive training and there is a system of accountability to share meaningful feedback to families about the progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders share high expectations through on-going workshops, including professional learning time (PLTs), staff conferences, paraprofessional workshops, and early career teacher academy, staff handbooks, newsletters, emails and staff memorandums. The school administrative cabinet has implemented a frequent walkthrough schedule and teachers are provided feedback utilizing the school's top 10 instructional best practices and Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School leaders hold staff accountable for updating online grade books, professional activity logs and bulletin boards resulting in teachers actively incorporating professional learning strategies into their classrooms. One-third of the teachers who struggled with Domain one and three have demonstrated gains in their observation ratings for these domains.
- The principal and other school leaders communicate expectations via bulletin boards, monthly newsletters, and assemblies and workshops for students and their families. Students and their families speak highly of the school and the communication received concerning academic and social-emotional support. Parents discussed attending parent and school leadership team meetings, and appreciate the open door policy at the school and opportunities to engage in their children's learning and progress. Monthly calendars distributed to parents convey details on assessments, school and district events, and other information. During the parent interviews, parents shared that they value the open and honest feedback from teachers and their efforts to support families, such as incorporating text messaging as a mode of communication. A parent showed a recent text message she sent to her child's English Language Arts (ELA) teacher; "We have pushed her to dig into her full potential towards this research project. We will continue as a family to help and encourage her to do her best. We appreciate your interest in teaching our daughter and thank you very much."
- Open houses communicate expectations for curriculum connected to college and career readiness to families on assessments, student attendance, homework, discipline, volunteering, and other vital information. Additionally, school leaders have established systems for communicating with families to deepen their understanding of grade level requirements via grade 6-8 orientations, curriculum night, student-led conferences, and the school's website. Bulletin boards decorated and labeled with colleges and trips expose students and families to a wide variety of colleges. Teachers make relevant connections to the real world during advisories, such as math problems related to computing sale items and proportional reasoning.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classrooms visited, teaching strategies and scaffolds inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the lesson and student discussions reflected uneven levels of student engagement.

Impact

Across classrooms there were missed opportunities to engage all learners in challenging tasks and higher order thinking, thus hindering students from participating and exhibiting their work at high levels.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching strategies, routines, and questioning in many classrooms, do not consistently meet the varied needs of learners, as prescribed in curriculum maps, resulting in uneven levels of student thinking, participation, and work products across the school. Though accountable talk stems and discussion questions were viewed in the classes, students primarily responded to the teacher and if prompted to turn to partners and share, did not use the accountable talk stems to initiate and expound to stimulate discussion.
- The school's instructional goals include a focus on student discussion and higher-order questions; however questioning techniques did not extend to the student-to-student level. Classroom visits revealed that pedagogical practices were inconsistently aligned with the schoolwide goals on discussion. For example, in two classrooms for students with disabilities, there was limited student-to-student discussion. In the majority of classes visited, students sat in rows, worked independently, and responded directly to the teacher. In a grade ELA class, students analyzed themes in *The Lightning Thief*. The teacher read from the text and asked "Would they stay at Camp Half Blood year round?" "Why or Why not?" "Is there a message that the author wants to show us?" In a grade 7 math class, students discussed different strategies to choose the best job using their knowledge of commission. The teacher asked the students to restate their classmates' strategies. Although scaffolds were used by some students, peer discourse, and opportunities for students to interact with each other were limited, with few students engaging in discussions without the support of their teachers.
- In a few classrooms visited, all students worked on the same task with some variations in approaches. In an ELA class, students participated in station learning. In a grade 7 science class, students were tasked to read and annotate the text about the characteristics of the phylum Cnidaria. Students called out, some students annotated, and others were not engaged as indicated by their heads down or unresponsiveness to activity.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards with the integration of the instructional shifts. Critical thinking skills and analysis are consistently emphasized and coherently planned for all learners across grades and subjects.

Impact

The curricula planning promotes coherence which ensures that students are college and career ready. Tasks across grades and content areas encourage thinking for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curriculum maps across all content areas reflect both Common Core Learning Standards and citywide instructional shifts as evidenced in objectives, questions and activities. Based on gaps identified between previous curriculum maps and the Common Core Learning Standards, student needs based on power standards, and instructional shifts, school leaders and teachers plan together to design curricula that includes content understandings and grade level competencies. Additionally, teachers incorporate strategies for English Language Learners (ELLs), differentiated texts, sentence starters, checklists and other supports to encourage access for all learners.
- Teacher teams regularly refine units of study and tasks using student work. Based on student work, teachers strategically include citing textual evidence in activities and tasks to bolster student writing. For example, the math and ELA team, a blended team, meets to analyze student work to assess mastery and to adapt the task and instructional techniques accordingly. ELA instructional shifts are integrated through performance tasks in social studies and science lessons. In one task, students in grade 6 participate in notetaking while reading to learn about global warming. Students rotated through a station activity and read informational texts related to global warming around the world. The activity provided a springboard for the data collection required for a culminating project, an informational essay on a topic of their choice. In a grade 8 science lesson, students were tasked to determine the role of genetic diversity in natural selection by reading a passage on two different species of mammoth.
- The school utilizes resources from the New York City core curriculum for social studies and science, *CMP3*, Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP), and *Expeditionary Learning*. The school has built opportunities, such as advisory, to engage in learning that promotes college and career readiness. Accordingly, former grade 8 students earning credit on track to high school graduation increased from 69% in 2014 to 77% in 2015. The advisory curriculum reflects topics explicitly in public speaking and underlying themes in responsibility and accountability.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The use of common assessments and checks for understanding to measure student progress toward goals across grades is inconsistent.

Impact

There are structures to measure student learning, although these structures do not consistently lead to the necessary adjustments that address students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers uses a variety of common assessments, such as Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), simulations, periodic assessments, unit tests in literacy and math, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL), and New York State assessments to track student progress. The results of the data and item analysis allow for formation of groups. Due to the importance of conferencing on a consistent basis to inform students of next steps, the school is in the process of monitoring the impact of the practice.
- Across classrooms, teachers' use of ongoing checks for understanding, including asking and answering questions, as well as student self-assessments, inconsistently lead to instructional adjustments that address all learners especially ELLs and students with disabilities. In a few lessons, teachers used exit slips as checks for understanding, while in other classrooms, there were minimal checks for understanding throughout the lesson.
- Instructional assessment practices are inconsistent and school leaders addressed this on the teachers' observations. In the majority of the classes, teachers provided whole group instruction and students either listened or responded to the teacher. In a grade 6 self-contained class, students worked in groups as they took notes. For students needing additional support, the teacher adjusted the lesson, explained the task and redirected students for more clarity. However, in other classrooms, teachers circulated around the room as students worked, but this practice did not yield adjustments to lessons, or mid-lesson interruption to share observations that reinforced keeping students on track.

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured collaborations that promote the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributive leadership affords teachers a voice in decisions.

Impact

Teachers have a voice in decisions and their instructional capacity is strengthened through teacher team collaboration.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has various teams including those for grade levels, vertical content areas, special education, and data/MOSL, as well as the instructional cabinet. Department teams, particularly ELA, math, science, and social studies, meet once a week for 90 minutes to review student work and collaborate on strategies. Teachers use protocols to guide their work as they engage in structured team activities. Teachers shared they look at student data to identify trends and develop a plan to address the areas identified.
- Using protocols while looking at student work, teachers learn strategies from their team members and collaborate to brainstorm ideas that would address the needs of targeted students. According to *Advance* data, at least one-third of the teachers have improved on informal observations in Domain 3b. Additionally, instructional practices have improved through seeing the work in other grades and identifying the specific standards students struggle to master. Teacher teams discuss strategies and use technology to review data to identify specifically what supports students need to be successful. For example, the math team shared that 20% of grade 7 students struggled with multi-step percent problems. Teachers, upon further discussion, are including more problem-solving and sharing strategies into their lessons so students can explain their thinking orally and in written form. Teachers stated that students have improved since they have included open-ended response questions in order for students to explicate the problem and their solution.
- Model and peer-collaborative teachers are members of the instructional cabinet. Lead teachers attend professional development and share their learning with staff. Teachers conduct workshops for families and share instructional strategies to help students reach goals. The school leader fosters distributive leadership on teacher teams by rotating teachers' roles as facilitator, timekeeper and recorder. Teachers shared that there is an open line of communication with administration and they have a voice in assessments and curricula. The principal attends the science and the cluster teachers' meetings, one assistant principal attends the ELA and the social studies teachers' meetings, and the other assistant principal attends the math teacher team meeting to support teachers.