



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

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

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

M.S. 301 Paul L. Dunbar

Middle School X301

**890 Cauldwell Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Hesham Farid

**Date of review: May 6, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez**

The School Context

M.S. 301 Paul L. Dunbar is a middle school with 202 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 40% Black, 58% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 22% English Language Learners and 27% 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 was 87.8%.

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	Developing
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 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	Additional Findings	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	Celebration	Proficient

Area of Celebration

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

The majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations that are focused on the goal of implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, and the embedded instructional shifts. Distributed leadership structures support the development of teacher leadership and teachers have a voice in decisions that affect learning across the school.

Impact

Collaborative analysis of student work and data, along with teacher input in school level decision making contribute to improvement of teacher practice and student mastery of learning goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school's schedule is organized to support daily common planning time to allow all teachers the opportunity to collaborate with grade level and content area colleagues in structured meetings. Agendas for these meetings are generated by teachers and include administration's support as appropriate. Teachers use this time consistently and effectively to look at student work and develop adjustments to lesson plans. For example, adding more modeling time for how to paraphrase was decided after English Language Arts (ELA) teachers reviewed essays that were verbatim copies of texts. Teachers also discuss results from common assessments and share strategies for addressing students' learning needs.
- During the observation of one teacher team, teachers assessed three pieces of student work using a very specific protocol in which each teacher shared their noticings and identified gaps in student writing. The team discussed the trends in the student work that they should prioritize such as insufficient citation of evidence and need for paraphrasing. Teachers then discussed how to address this in their lesson plans and brainstormed a selection of mentor texts and possible strategies that could additionally support their English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.
- Teachers interviewed also stated that they use similar protocols in their collaborative meetings and that these practices are impacting schoolwide coherence and Common Core Learning Standards based expectations for student work.
- Teacher leadership is strengthened as a result of these structured collaborations. Teachers facilitate the meetings and discussions including the identification of priorities for adjusting curriculum and instruction, are influencing decisions about what students learn across the school. For example, in the observed team, one teacher facilitated and provided the student work for review, but all teachers contributed to the suggestions of revisions to lessons. These were documented to be followed up on in subsequent meetings as evidenced by the discussion of next steps.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

Across classroom lessons, teaching strategies inconsistently reflect rigorous tasks that engage all students in critical thinking and rigorous academic discussions.

Impact

Students have limited opportunities to deepen learning via challenging tasks and discussions that consistently demand higher order thinking across disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, lessons inconsistently engaged students in discussion about their learning. In the science class, for example, the teacher activated prior knowledge leading into a lesson about how magnetism affects plant growth. Students were able to engage in discussion with one another and ask questions of the teacher using academic language such as, “control group, variable, and hypothesis.” Throughout the lesson, the teacher reminded students to use academic language. However this type of discussion was not typical of lessons observed across grades or content.
- In a creative, hands-on lesson on the respiratory system, students built models using everyday items such as balloons straws and soda bottles. Students worked in groups of three to four students and replicated the structure of the rib cage around the lungs and engaged in discussion but, the conversation is primarily around the actual building of the model. As the lesson concluded, the teacher reminded students about the importance of protecting their lungs during an accident. Students had limited opportunities to use the language related to the respiratory system or to relate the model to the larger content objectives.
- In an eighth grade math class students worked on various exercises that required them to use the Pythagorean Theorem to determine the hypotenuse of a right triangle. The teacher sat with a small group of students to support them. However, as they worked on the assigned task, the teacher commented "Some of you kind of understand it" and to a particular student, "You just put it on the side and solve it." The limited use of academic language by the teacher and students hinders their conceptual understanding of the math content.
- The school's implementation of a workshop model across all classrooms has established clear structures for the learning process. Teachers develop learning objectives that are written using specific guidance in a planning guide such as "What are students going to learn?", "Is the objective clear?", and "Is the task doable in the given time?" The emerging practices of modeling and student-to-student collaboration are strengthening the instructional program to support all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Analysis of student work and a variety of student assessment data provide staff with relevant information on students' performance and inform adjustments to curricula and instruction. Students receive feedback relative to their performance and progress on a variety of assessments.

Impact

Teachers and students have access to data that informs their next steps. Teacher interventions and curricular adjustments address specific individual student needs and accelerate student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have implemented common assessment practices such as use of Common Core Standards based rubrics that allow teachers to identify student needs, target instruction, and track student progress. One way the teachers are able to do this is by using on-demand writing assessments that are aligned to the schoolwide Teachers College writing units. These are administered three times a year at the beginning and end of learning units. Overall scores and analysis of student writing has revealed increased volume on standardized test type prompts. Teachers have also noted an increase in the number of questions students are answering on end of unit formal assessments.
- In math, teacher's use assessments from *EngageNY* and questions from prior New York State assessments to determine student needs. This allows teachers to make adjustments to pacing and sequencing of curricular units to address skill and concept areas for which students need additional support. For example, teachers used item analyses that pointed to deficits in problem solving skills which they addressed throughout various units of study.
- School leaders and teachers developed an assessment calendar for the school that has cohesively aligned all content areas and assessment practices. The calendar identifies a baseline midyear and end of year timeline for scoring and looking at data. Information from *i-Ready* assessments in ELA and math are analyzed by teachers to determine pedagogical adjustments.
- All teachers engaged in data conversations with the principal, as part of their individual planning conferences at the beginning of the school year. The principal provided teachers with the data about their students. Teachers organized this information to determine realistic goals and identify subgroups of students who are approximating proficiency. Teachers also collaborated with colleagues to address particular content skills within units of study.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and integrating the instructional shifts. Academic tasks emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills inconsistently across grades and subjects.

Impact

Units of study and lessons yield inconsistent opportunities for all students to access complex text and content.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers have aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards including Teachers College and American Reading Company for ELA and *EngageNY* and *Connected Mathematics 3 (CM3)* for math. In order to address the instructional shifts, the school has embedded Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* question stems into lesson plans to promote asking higher order thinking questions across content areas. In addition, all teachers participate on curriculum teams to identify gaps and trends in student learning and use information from lessons to make adjustments and plan pedagogical strategies.
- A review of planning documents and lesson plans indicates the teachers have planned for scaffolds of learning for a variety of learning groups such as struggling readers and English Language Learners or students with disabilities. However, many of the scaffolds are generic in nature. For example in a unit on reading realistic fiction, the section for multiple entry points for English Language Learners states "Use discussion to help students." For "below level readers", the modification stated, "Support by scaffolding - extra modeling or buddy with another student."
- School leaders and teachers are beginning to make purposeful decisions to ensure that they use the analysis of student work and student learning to adjust curricular units and lesson plans. A recent analysis of students' needs was based on reading standards that address proficiency in standards for identifying central ideas and themes in text. Teachers used data to develop an independent reading program and guided reading groups that focused on key skills and strategies and the implementation of reading interventions for struggling readers.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Administrators communicate high expectations for learning to all families and school staff, and implement varied support systems to help them work with students to meet the expectations. School leaders hold all staff accountable for meeting high expectations for teaching and learning across the school.

Impact

Communication of and support for high expectations for all staff promote accountability for staff and student learning. Communication and collaboration with families foster an understanding of high expectations for all students, and support families in helping their children meet the expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have identified clear and high expectations for teaching and learning aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and created a staff handbook that outlines the expectations. The new principal has created opportunities for teachers to improve their practice every day by providing adequate support through professional development resources, instructional coaches, and assistant principal support through observation and feedback cycles. The on-going communication with the faculty is a “strength for the school”, as evidenced in a teacher’s response during teacher team interviews. A message of renewed commitment to high performance alongside excellent teaching and learning has been conveyed to staff and students.
- The school’s implementation of an online grading reporting system enables teachers to continually outreach to parents about student progress and performance on assessments. Parents are also informed via backpacked letters about parent informational events and schoolwide expectations. A schoolwide parent and student orientation program as well as the distribution of a student and parent handbook lay the foundation for the important information that all members of the school community need to have, as well as the expectations for attendance, learning and behavior.
- The guidance counselor works closely with students to ensure that they understand the connection between their current grade level performance and schoolwork and the high school expectation that is before them. As a result of targeted advisement and support 100% of students got into the high schools of their choice this year. The expectation is not only about high school but about post-secondary readiness. The school partners with several universities to ensure that students are aware of setting long-term goals for their academic careers.