



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2015-2016

**New Millennium Business Academy Middle School**

**Middle School X328**

**1000 Teller Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Dorald Bastian**

**Date of review: April 1, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

## The School Context

New Millennium Business Academy Middle School is a middle school with 188 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 34% Black, 64% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 24% English Language Learners and 29% students with disabilities. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 89.8%.

## 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>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Additional Findings</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>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Proficient</b>

## Area of Celebration

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.1 Curriculum**

**Rating:**

**Proficient**

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous higher-order thinking skills.

### Impact

The curriculum ensures that students are engaged in common core aligned learning experiences that prepare students for career and college readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of lesson plans reveals that students are provided complex texts that focus on academic vocabulary, the use of close reading strategies and annotation of texts in English, science and social studies. Across all content areas students are exposed to more than two texts in each unit and are expected to incorporate the information presented from each text in their writing tasks. For example, in one science lesson, students read two articles on spiders. One article was easier to read and contained general information while the other was a scientific article providing students with scientific terms such as cephalothoraxes. Students were expected to use both sources and include information from each of the articles in their essay.
- The mathematics curricula has a strong focus on the instructional shifts especially, real life application as well as, the mathematical practice of constructing logical arguments. In one grade eight class, students are expected to solve problems, explain in writing how negative and positive exponents are related and, explain when scientific notation should not be used. In another math lesson, students are asked to calculate the volume of an ice cream cone given the radius and height of the cone and the radius of the ice cream itself. In addition, the task requires students to state if the volume of the ice cream can be contained in the cone and explain their rationale for the position they take.
- In the English Language Arts unit on argumentative writing, students are asked to read various texts, examine claims and counterclaims and provide vivid examples and anecdotes in order to convince the reader of their thesis. In one science task related to the concept of propulsion, students are to use the evidence from three different lab reports to support their hypothesis on rocket propulsion. In a social studies task students analyze primary and secondary sources to establish relationships among claims to argue a question in a unit focusing on the benefits of urbanization.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

High expectations are made clear to all staff via the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* through training and ongoing communication. School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to students and families and keep them informed of student progress toward college and career readiness.

### Impact

A system of accountability for these high expectations has been developed for all staff. While families state that school leaders offer on-going feedback to them about student progress, the opportunity for them to be partners in the work is still in progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate expectations to teachers through conferences, team meetings, emails and a weekly newsletter called the *Millennium Muse*. This newsletter provides teachers with updated school information and shares inquiry findings from teacher teams centered on areas that are connected to the school's instructional focus. One of the most recent editions stressed student engagement and reminded teachers to provide high levels of thinking and discussion through the use of planned questions that are both open-ended as well as, those that require specific answers.
- School leaders provide teachers with on and off site professional development opportunities to support the implementation of the Teacher's College Writing Units. Additional professional development is provided by the American Reading Company to support the 100 Book Challenge, a program designed to increase individual student's reading fluency. School based coaches provide teachers with support regarding strategies related to differentiation, the writing process and questioning techniques.
- Parents shared that they are kept informed of their child's progress through calls, text messages, emails and *Kinvolved*, an online grade book and messaging system. Parents shared that while there are many supports for struggling students and the school communicates a path to career and college readiness, there are missed opportunities to partner with them in ways that could maximize the efforts of the school. For example, parents stated that while there are many after school and Saturday programs to support students they did not have a voice in the selection of the community based organizations or the programs offered.

## Additional Findings

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

Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all students and class discussions reflect high levels of student thinking.

### Impact

As a result of providing multiple entry points all students have access to the curricula, are appropriately challenged and engaged in high levels of student thinking and conversation.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and subjects varying question categories were in evidence. Questions are listed as sweet, mild, spicy and hot, and range across the Depth of Knowledge continuum. For example, sweet questions are questions requiring simple, obvious answers. These questions allow for students who have limited language skills to participate and they are also used to build background understanding. Spicy questions are questions that require students to combine information or reference various sources to make inferences. In a grade seventh grade science class English Language Learners were observed working together on sweet questions such as “What do you know about spiders?” and “How many legs does a spider have?” Another group of students were discussing a spicy question asking, “How can a spider’s web give you specific information on the type of spider that spun it?”
- Lessons provided multiple entry points through pre-teaching of vocabulary, including the use of word banks and sentence starters. To ensure that everyone has time to formulate an answer, teachers use wait time and have students think and talk in pairs or triads before sharing as a large group. In some classrooms students were paired according to English fluency to enable sharing of ideas. Teachers used strategies from the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) including guided practice and linking present learning to previous lessons. A language objective and a content objective were listed in every classroom and teachers reminded students of both targets throughout the lesson. Students also worked on modified texts, which had been abbreviated for struggling students in conjunction with the round robin protocol for reading. This combination of practices was evidenced in a grade six class where students were working on writing a short response requiring them to compare and contrast two articles.
- High levels of student participation and thinking were observed in all classrooms. In one grade seven English Language Arts class, students were engaged in a discussion dealing with two texts with similar themes. The class had read two articles about dogs and was discussing the difference between the lives of dogs, and what could be inferred about the families who owned them from the relationship they had with their dogs. In a grade 8 social studies class, students worked on developing claims regarding our foreign policy in China, Korea and Syria. Students stated their claim and shared their notes and evidence from the selected reading with their peers. Students were required to share evidence on how foreign policy impacts the citizens of the country. All evidence presented needed to be justified. This requirement resulted in high-level engagement among the students. English Language Learners in this class had graphic organizers, additional notes and translations available to them and were able to participate by sharing their analysis of life in these countries.

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

Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals. Their assessment practices reflect the ongoing use of checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

### **Impact**

The analysis of common assessments leads to curricular adjustments and the ongoing use of checks for understanding results in effective mid-lesson adjustments in small groups.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- In September, the school administered the 2015 NYS Common Core Mathematics Test. Analysis of the results indicated that 15% scored at the city average. The school revised the curriculum map and taught the unit earlier in the term. Additionally, the teachers added extended the number of teaching days for the unit by five days to provide more time for students to grasp the content-concepts. The school specified the lessons and the tasks for the unit as well. In January, when the school administered another common assessment on this standard, the data indicated a 33% increase in student performance.
- The baseline assessment for argumentative writing in grade six revealed that while students were correctly citing claims and giving strong reasons and evidence for their argument, their writing lacked flow, voice, and failed to establish and maintain a formal style. Almost 95% of the class fell in the “far below average” range on this assessment. Adjustments were made throughout the unit. The explicit teaching of transitional phrases was a major focus of the revision. Teaching the use of phrases such as “Furthermore the researcher claims”, and “This proves that...” as well as learning how to elaborate their writing through the use of definitions, quotes and examples were some of the important additions to the unit. The post assessment data indicated that 71% of the students fell in the “approaching standards” range, a positive increase of 24%.
- Across classrooms, teachers provide ongoing checks for understanding using the school’s tiered question system resulting in adjustments to their learning groups. However, there is some missed opportunity for all students to be aware of similar misconceptions that are made in small groups by their peers that may relate to their next learning steps.
- Teachers partner students to receive feedback on their writing. In some classrooms students were asked to share one thing their partner did correctly and one thing they needed to improve on. For example, in one social studies class, students were partnered with each other to receive feedback on the evidence they collected for their essay. In another social studies class students were paired with a focus on expanding their evidence. Students were held accountable for elaborating or changing their evidence based on peer feedback.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

**Impact**

As a result of teacher collaborations in structured inquiry cycles, teachers have strengthened their instructional practices and their work has resulted in progress towards school goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- One of the school goals is to have an increase of 30% in the number of students scoring a 3 or higher on the end of unit benchmarks for the Teachers’ College Writing Units. To this end, teachers have selected a small caseload of students across grades that struggle with their writing. This caseload is primarily comprised of students with individualized education plans and English Language Learners. Teachers meet weekly to monitor the progress of these students using a protocol called the *Analysis of Student Writing*. Teachers collect on demand writing from these students from three different genres such as narrative, informational and argumentative writing. Findings from the analysis of student work are used to develop strategies for differentiation and to adjust curricula. Latest data from the previous end of unit writing assessment revealed a 20% increase in the number of students from the selected group performing at standard.
- During a teacher team meeting, teachers shared that their work on the inquiry team has enabled them to make connections between what students are doing in their writing and the type of differentiation that their students need. They have become more familiar with their own learning style and they have taken on different roles on the team aligned to their strength. For example, one teacher stated that he is more visual and volunteered to provide visual differentiation for students. As the focus on writing cuts across disciplines, teachers stated that this has resulted in uniformity in instruction across grades and content areas. End of unit writing assessments in science, social studies and English Language Arts (ELA) are all scored with a common writing rubric. This work has also resulted in modifications to the science, social studies and English Language Arts curriculum maps.
- Content area teams meet to look at baseline, midline and ongoing benchmark assessments. They use the Santa Cruz protocol to look at student work. During this time teachers look for implications for improvement in instruction, as well as adjustments to curriculum such as, modifying the essential understanding, modifying assessments to include the identified English Language Arts power standards and to modify or embed additional content skills.