



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

I.S. 339

Middle School X339

**1600 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10457**

Principal: Kim Outerbridge

**Date of review: March 8, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich**

The School Context

I.S. 339 is a middle school school with 519 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 28% Black, 70% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 27% English Language Learners and 26% students with disabilities. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 91.0%.

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 Finding	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	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	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, the embedded instructional shifts, and the attainment of other school wide goals. 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

- Teachers, in both content and interdisciplinary teams, are programmed to meet every other day in a common planning period. Minutes of team meetings indicate that a variety of professional development activities occur on Mondays and Tuesdays, allowing teachers to collaborate regularly to improve their practice. Teachers stated that they work as colleagues to address students' needs and identify strategies for English Language Learners (ELLs). Creation of action plans to provide an opportunity to show growth throughout the school year and improve reading and writing is also done collaboratively. Teachers examined student work to identify areas where students had the most challenges. For example, analysis indicated that sixth graders struggled with gathering evidence to support claims when they read the novel, *Bud, Not Buddy*. The teachers conducted an item analysis of an assessment to determine why students struggled with certain questions. From this they created an action plan to address areas of critical need and next steps within the classroom, including tiered groups.
- At team meetings, teachers refine curricula, develop and evaluate assessments, and design instructional adjustments and improvement plans for students. New and veteran teachers alike stated that working collaboratively has helped to strengthen their skills. A new teacher shared, "Working with this particular team has strengthened my abilities to address struggling students, especially those who are learning English. I go to another teacher who shares strategies and best practices." During a teacher team meeting, one teacher stated that they used data to revise curricula, which resulted in their addressing writing. The team included writing in the scope and sequence as well as in the daily lessons to provide continuous opportunities so that students would increase their performance leading to their achieving mastery.
- Teachers identified for levels of expertise or recognized as instructional leaders serve as part of the extended cabinet, building teacher capacity in relation to targeted elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Some staff members are on the professional development committee, where they create and implement professional development sessions for their peers. Teachers interviewed, reported that they have regular input into school decisions. One teacher stated, "The extended cabinet is our decision-making area. It is not top down." For example, they chose writing standard 6.9 to work on in grade teams. Writing was then the focus for students during extended learning time. *Mastery Connect*, a data system, was decided on by the cabinet as well. They are empowered to set the agenda for the weekly team meetings, and routinely recommend instructional resources and choose their own professional development activities.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

While some teachers use teaching strategies that engage students at all levels, some lessons that were viewed neither incorporated rigorous tasks nor immersed all students in deep peer-to-peer discussions linked to complex texts.

Impact

There were missed opportunities to deepen learning by all students via challenging tasks and discussions that consistently demand higher-order thinking across disciplines.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers in some classrooms engaged students in challenging tasks such as reading texts to cite evidence to respond to tasks and to use academic vocabulary to explain the gist of a speech. For example, in two grade 7 English Language Arts (ELA) classes students were challenged to annotate a speech by Cesar Chavez. Although this was a text rich in academic vocabulary, in one English as a New Language (ENL)/ELA class and one Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) ELA grade 7 class, students were provided additional supports, including a Spanish translation to provide a structure for which to annotate, and multiple opportunities to share with a partner. Students were engaged and many participated in the think-pair-share opportunities, where they could demonstrate their thinking. However, in another ELA class, for both English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, the annotation and discussion was teacher-directed and ping-ponged from the teacher to a few students and back to the teacher. Many students were left outside the conversation and this resulted in some students with their heads down and one group neither speaking nor writing to express their thoughts.
- In a math class, the teacher implemented a Socratic Seminar, having students sit in both the inner and outer circles, with those in the center using white board slates. Students worked to solve and discuss multistep scenarios to determine if there was a linear relationship between two unknowns, using the slope and y-intercept method. Students are familiar with Socratic Seminar rules, as evidenced by two students who joined the “hot seat” and posed questions. However, students in the outer circle did not have a set of responsibilities to be held accountable. The teacher moved from student-centered at the beginning of the seminar, to a teacher-centered discussion at the board, which moved from teacher to student and back again. Similarly, in a science class, the teacher posed closed-ended questions regarding natural selection, often in the fill-in-the-blank fashion for students to answer from teacher-to-student. A few students had opportunities to share their thinking.
- In a grade 8 ICT/ELA class, a high level of peer-to-peer discussion was evident as students discussed and shared with the whole class as to whether two characters in *To Kill a Mockingbird* were applying the “Golden Rule.” Students dominated the discussion as they quoted evidence from the text to support their claims, as the teachers continually raised the level of questions with gentle probing questions. However, in another grade 8 ICT/ELA class focused on finding the climax of a chapter in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, a teacher divided students into groups to read a section and cite text to support their reasons. Students read silently, and then in groups some students spoke about the sections they believed were the climax. Although several students could define the climax of a chapter, several students misunderstood content, preventing them from determining the climax and discussing it.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects for all students including English Language Learners and students with disabilities.

Impact

The faculty builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all students through rigorous curricula in all subjects that provide opportunities for students to be cognitively engaged.

Supporting Evidence

- The staff and administration have adopted Common Core-aligned texts, for English Language Arts. Teachers College Writing and Reading Program (TCRP) is used for writing while *Expeditionary Learning* is used for the remainder of the English Language Arts curricula. To determine students' reading level, teachers employ *Fountas and Pinnell* reading running records. Teachers have made a switch this year, employing *EngageNY* for math, instead of *Connected Math Project 3 (CMP3)*, which was previously used. The staff and administration have developed performance tasks for social studies and science, as they follow the New York City Scope and Sequence for both. For social studies, *History Alive* supports the basic content-concepts for social studies and *FOSS* science kits along with *Discovery.com* and *Glencoe* textbooks are used for the science curricula. The staff implements a common format for units of study, outlining the timeline, essential questions, materials, elements and skills within the Common Core-aligned texts, writing activities, assessments, and differentiated assignments, promoting coherence of practice. The faculty ensures that lesson plans also have agreed upon components including the workshop model, using the "I do, we do, you do" method as well as adding a second "you do" to provide students with multiple opportunities to practice.
- The staff and administration determined that students need additional support in writing and vocabulary acquisition so this remains an instructional focus for this year. To this end, teachers devote a section regarding demonstrating writing in most curriculum-planning documents. This runs the range from a grade 7 English as a New Language (ENL)/English Language Arts (ELA) lesson finding the gist of a speech by Cesar Chavez to a grade 8 math lesson on linear relationships in a Socratic Seminar.
- Curricula planning documents emphasize higher-order skills for all students by incorporating differentiation making it accessible for all students. For example, in a grade 8 ELA lesson, groups are listed by student names and learning needs for a lesson on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. There are different group assignments with increasingly more writing required for those with more developed skills ensuring that curricula is rigorous and accessible for all learners.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments that measure students' progress of acquired skills aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, rubrics, and a common grading policy aligned to the school's curricula.

Impact

The school analyzes assessment results to adjust instruction and curricula to meet student-learning needs. Common assessments provide a common lens and language to discuss student progress and inform instructional adjustments to advance student achievement and teachers provide actionable feedback to students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers provide students with feedback on their work, which is posted on bulletin boards both inside and outside classrooms. The actionable feedback that is rooted in the rubric language is attached to the rubric with ratings and includes areas of achievement and areas that need improvement. In students' notebooks and folders, student work has teacher's responses in checkmarks, actionable feedback, and some with statements or stickers of encouragement. Students can explain their next step according to feedback for use on the next assignment.
- Teachers have aligned assessments to the curricula and created or aligned checklists and rubrics to support scores for student achievement. Students agreed that they use rubrics or checklists in revising their work or "to work towards getting a 4 on something by looking at what a 4 requires and then adding those pieces into the essay or assignment." Students agreed with this statement and others added, "The rubric tells us what to include" and sometimes checklists "help because we get it before we finish the drafting for our writing so we can check off the things we did or didn't do and if we forgot something, then we go back and add it." Students also stated that they use the rubrics in peer and self-grading to help determine completion and ratings.
- A data cycle consistent across classrooms includes providing common assessments, analyzing student assessment for mastery and areas of critical need, creating an action plan, and then reassessing. An assessment calendar is published. Teachers use common formative and summative assessments and use the analysis of data to determine student progress toward goals. Teachers use a common form called "Examining your students' assessment results to determine instructional next steps" to analyze these results to position students in tiers, 1, 2, and 3 per class, and then create next instructional steps. Teachers use *Mastery Connect*, an online data warehouse, to support their analysis of these pre-, mid-, and post-common assessments. *Mastery Connect* provides the staff with color-coded graphs and charts to support their analysis and revisions of lessons and units, as well as tiered student grouping. For example, by comparing students' progress toward the mastery of a grade 8 reading standard teachers were able to determine a need for re-teaching the standard as no students had achieved mastery during the two inquiry rounds.
- Teachers track students' reading levels through *Fountas and Pinnell* running records. Students know their reading levels and strategies for improving reading, as well as have yearlong goals for reading. Teachers use an online grade book called *Engrade*. Students stated that they check *Engrade* often, some stating weekly and most stating monthly.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback.

Impact

School leaders provide training and have a system of accountability for those high expectations. Ongoing feedback is given to help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration provides staff with several iterations of high expectations through a staff handbook, memos, bulletins, feedback from classroom observations, and debrief sessions. Additionally, administration provided a first day orientation, outlining for staff expectations related to such areas as student engagement, lesson planning, implementation of the workshop model, use of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the *Framework for Great Schools*.
- To set teacher goals, administrators and teachers discuss high expectations during the initial individual planning conferences. Observations are followed by meetings to provide specific feedback for implementation in the classroom and looked for during follow-up observations. At the weekly grade and departmental meetings, teacher leaders shared these expectations. Inter-visitations among teacher teams are scheduled. Administrators attend teacher team meetings aligned to their areas of responsibility. The cycle of feedback is evident in several samples of observations reviewed. The administration provided staff actionable feedback based on these expected practices.
- The professional development plan provides staff with the necessary support to achieve the high expectations that have been set around student engagement. Some of the professional development is planned and implemented by the staff for the staff. Teachers answered a survey conducted by teachers for teachers to determine their professional learning needs. For example, teachers presented their work on the workshop model, while lead teachers conduct grade and professional planning of team meetings.
- Teachers reach out to parents weekly to communicate student progress and areas of needed support. Parents agreed, sharing they are pleased with the consistent communication they receive from the school especially that it is in their home language. All communications, written or spoken, are in English and Spanish, the main languages of the school. Further, parents stated that they check their child's grades through *Engrade*, an online grade book. Teachers share syllabi with parents and students, which outline the class expectations, grading policy, and are translated into Spanish. Administration provides a parent/guardian handbook, explaining policies, procedures, and expectations. Above and beyond the weekly parent outreach by teachers, the school provides parent workshops based on parents' needs throughout the year. The parent workshops to date include the high school fairs, fathers' forum, and *Rosetta Stone* language classes. Additionally, the guidance counselor has organized multiple sessions on the high school application process. Students spoke about attending these sessions and stated that they felt supported during the high school selection process.