



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

M.S. 390

Middle School X390

**1930 Andrews Avenue
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Robert Mercedes

**Date of review: November 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

The School Context

M.S. 390 is a middle school with 457 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 13% Black, 85% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 25% English Language Learners and 24% students with disabilities. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.8%.

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	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	Proficient
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
---------------------------	---	----------------	-------------------

Findings

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

Impact

Improved teacher practice and strengthened instructional capacity result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are engaged in six to eight week learning cycles in which they are looking at student work based on the Common Core Learning Standards that are informing their instructional next steps. Teacher teams use the following protocols: Looking at Student Work, Atlas, and Tuning. Due to the collective work and collaboration of the teams, students have increased their proficiency levels in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math and the number of students performing in the lowest third has been reduced. Teachers stated, “The impact on our practice has been tremendous. We share a common language and in the past we did not.”
- Teachers across content and grade levels participate in inter-visitations and the data from the visits is being used to identify instructional implications for their work. For example, teachers in the math and science departments send selected students who are able to perform at higher levels to different classes to expose them to work in higher grades.
- “The focus of data has changed the conversation at our team meetings”, according to a teacher team member. There has been an increase in scale scores with a progression through and between grade levels, specifically in the Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) teams. The school has one of the largest increases in the percent of their ICT students demonstrating progress on New York State exams. “If we were not looking at student work and analyzing student work, we would not see the improvements we’re seeing with our students and our own practice”, stated a grade 8 teacher leader.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Teaching practices are informed by the instructional shifts; however, class work that reveals high levels of student ownership varies across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- All students are involved in period zero literacy classes in an effort to increase their proficiency levels. During this time students are reading texts of their choosing in collaboration with the teacher and utilizing LightSail, an on-line program that assists students with choosing literature according to their lexile levels. The program also provides an assessment of the material and sends instantly actionable data to the student and teacher. Throughout classrooms teachers are conferencing with students on iPads and asking questions in relation to the books their students are reading.
- Socratic Seminar discussions in a grade 8 science class, grade 7 social studies class, and grade 6 math class reflect the school's belief that all students have the capacity and ability to learn. "Our students are multi-talented. We believe in order for our students to perform well, their classrooms need to be risk-free environments and technology must be infused", stated the principal. For example, in the grade 8 science class, the essential question, focused on genetics, asked, "How does life on earth continue and adapt to environmental change?" Student led discussion included responses connected to chromosomes, nucleus, DNA, and cell division. Students pushed each other's thinking and entered in and out of the inner and outer circles with ease.
- In an effort to ensure students are engaged in high levels of thinking and participation, Webb's *Depths of Knowledge* (DOK) questions at levels 3 and 4 are encouraged and expected to be incorporated into classroom discussions and tasks. However, students were asked questions at levels 1 and 2 in some classrooms. For example, in a grade 6 science class, students were asked, "What are elements of severe weather?" and "Do any of these elements help people?" In another grade 7 class, a teacher asked students "What can you show me in this math translation?" without asking students to further explain their rationale and reasoning.

Additional Findings

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. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order skills across grades and subjects.

Impact

The curricula promote access and build coherence in support of college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Due to the school's large population of students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), the faculty has ensured that these subgroups have access to all curricula across grades and content areas. As a result, the teachers and school leaders revised the *Expeditionary Learning* curriculum as well as their unit plans to better meet the needs of all of their students. Unit and lesson plans include the use of The Frayer Model, which is a visual organizer that helps students understand key words and concepts, make visual connections and personal associations, and think critically to find relationships between concepts to develop deeper understandings.
- The leadership team and teachers have focused on improving their math proficiency levels and in doing so have incorporated MathSpace into their curricula to support mastery-based, individualized, self-directed learning. The content area departments have made purposeful decisions to increase the level of exposure to informational text and literature.
- Technology has been integrated into all units and curricula maps as a means to promote the instructional shifts for their diverse student populations in the school. Lesson and unit plans include technology centered instructional foci. As an example, a grade 7 ICT ELA unit included mini-lessons encompassing video clips, students going to the interactive white board to explain their answers, and the use of iPads for independent reading.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement results in adjustments to curricula and instruction that meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers utilized and assessed data from the previous school year's New York State tests in ELA and math to identify specific areas where students did not demonstrate mastery and adjusted their curricula and scheduling to meet their needs. The period zero for all students is used to provide additional literacy instruction throughout the school day. In math, teachers decided to use the on-line resource *MobyMax* to assist students both in school and at home on math skills that are essential for next steps in student achievement.
- Teachers provide students with actionable feedback, which is used to inform both teacher and student next steps. When providing feedback, teachers included what is evident and next steps in alignment with the accompanying rubric. In a grade 6 science class, feedback included "Evident -The examples you used were good. Next steps – cite more details and examples and explain why they are important to the reader."
- The school used an item skills analysis and summary to assess all students in ELA to identify the gaps across the school by teacher and student. The teachers used the data to adjust their instructional practices. For example, teachers in all content areas must incorporate an end of lesson assessment that is connected to the item skills analysis and summary, and use the data to monitor how students are progressing in their gap areas. School leaders monitor the progress of student data to ensure the feedback being given is having impact both on teacher and student progress.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that consistently communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact

A system of accountability ensures ongoing and detailed feedback and advisement supports that prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- All teachers are expected to participate at the Fair Share by presenting artifacts with their department colleagues every six weeks. Every presentation is framed with an academic article and the best practices are shared. School leaders provide feedback to teachers on their presentations that are expected to be aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* Domain 3b, Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques. The ELA department focused on Socratic Seminar for their presentation. The presentation included open-ended questions used for a Socratic Seminar, interaction with the text before the seminar, the rubric used for evaluating students, the checklist used for monitoring the role of the moderator, and a seminar reflection.
- Grade level assemblies held on a monthly basis establish clear expectations for supporting students as they prepare for their next level. The assemblies recognize student achievement; promote opportunities for students to acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills contributing to learning about college and career. In partnership with Cornell University's Juntos program, grade 8 students are provided with the opportunity to access a college campus environment through a full-time school based success coach who meets with students on a bi-weekly basis. Students attend workshops with their coach on public speaking, academic success, healthy living, citizenship and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) topics. Grade 6 and 7 students are provided with college and career opportunities through a partnership with the Lehman College Upper Bound program.
- The school applied for and was accepted into the Progressive Redesign Opportunity Schools for Excellence (PROSE) program, cohort 2 and with the new scheduling flexibility, school leadership and teachers agreed to extend their periods to fifty minutes and relinquish one of their prep periods. Expectations for teaching and learning are communicated through a staff handbook, focused walk throughs, electronic communication, and staff memoranda.