Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

The Hunts Point School

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School X424

730 Bryant Avenue
Bronx
NY 10474

Principal: Steeve Traversiere

Date of review: May 12, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Heidi Pierovich

The School Context

The Hunts Point School is a junior high-intermediate-middle school with 323 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 0% Asian, 20% Black, 77% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 28% English Language Learners and 29% students with disabilities. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 89.9%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
School Culture		
To what extent does the school…	**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**	**Developing**
Systems for Improvement		
To what extent does the school…	**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
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place.

Impact
These professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards, strengthening the instructional capacity of teachers who have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are engaged in several teams, including grade and content teams, that each meet weekly. In the subject teams, teachers stated that, "Our function is to be that backbone and support for each other and share [instructional] ideas. This helps because the problem that my student is having is a problem that is going on in every class." A teacher team used a protocol for looking at students' work. A teacher presented her students' work and teachers asked clarifying questions. Next, the team shared suggested changes to the lesson plan upon which the teacher reflected and determined the instructional strategies she would next employ to reteach the lesson.

- Teachers stated that sharing best practices through this protocol has positively impacted their professional growth. One teacher stated, and others agreed, that sharing best practices has helped him grow, "These [meetings have] strengthened my practices because [when I present my] instructional ideas, if it is not clear for [my colleagues] who are my sounding board, then it will not be clear for my students." Teachers stated that working collegially has been beneficial, "I have noticed a lot of improvement in my instruction, and I have grown more this year." Additionally, teachers commented that an instructional coach, who is well versed in instructional strategies and the *Teachers College Reading Writing Program (TCRWP)*, has been supporting their growth. One teacher stated, "Having the instructional coach has helped us to use *TC* as prescribed [as] she has brought a lot knowledge of *TC*…she gave us wings."

- Teacher leaders facilitate the teacher team meetings with the support from the instructional coach. Additionally, there is an extended instructional cabinet where five teachers across content areas have a voice to add agenda items and make decisions that affect the school. For example, the extended instructional cabinet has made decisions to merge both English Language Arts (ELA) programs, *Code X* and *Teachers College Reading and Writing Program*, along with the 100 Book Challenge. One teacher stated, and others agreed, "It was a challenge to find the anchor texts. That was the first major undertaking the instructional cabinet did because there are so many programs." The extended instructional cabinet made the decision to go forward with using *TCRWP* exclusively for next year. Teachers on the extended instructional cabinet are liaisons to their departments, sharing information in both directions. Additionally, teachers make decisions about professional development sessions on the professional development committee.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Student work products and discussions are not always accessible to all students.

Impact
The uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English Language Learners and students with disabilities, does not yet reflect even levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The administration and staff believe that students learn best using the workshop model as evidenced by this instructional goal: "We will leverage questioning and discussion techniques to promote critical thinking so that students can build viable arguments supported by textual evidence in all subject areas." However, this belief system is in the beginning stages and is unevenly implemented across classes and grades based on classroom visits.

- To varying degrees, students engaged in challenging tasks with discussion and higher-order questions. In a grade 6 science class, students were engaged in a science experiment; in group discussions, they were deciding whether the student-created procedure for the experiment tested their hypothesis. Students were able to discuss why they selected certain ingredients to test and what they purported would happen based on evidence from a text they had read. On the other hand, in a grade 6 readers and writers workshop, students were to "stop and jot" ideas about how to organize a table of contents for the information books they were writing. Yet the teacher interrupted students as they were trying to write, and when they began to pair-share, most were quiet because their papers were mostly incomplete or blank. Similarly, in a grade 8 ELA class for students with special needs, students were to set goals for their writing and begin their first drafts of a persuasive essay regarding violent video games. One group discussed their reasons and cited evidence, but others stated whether they were for or against the argument without citing evidence. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) grade 8 math class, students were to answer in a turn-and-talk, "Explain in your own words how a rational number is different from an irrational number." Many students were confused about the difference, and at some tables, students were copying the board and not discussing, although the teacher had said it was not necessary take the notes. This prompted an extended explanation that thwarted the pacing.

- Some classes used different methods to provide access for students. In some cases, it supported learning, and in others, it had not yet done so. In a grade 8 social studies ICT class, students were working on drawing evidence from information text about the civil rights movement to support analysis, reflection, and research. Students were provided with different worksheets of Lexile-leveled questions with primary sources of photos and quotes from such topics as Brown v. Board of Education and the United Farm Workers. Yet students' discussion was uneven since some struggled to understand the pictures and quotes and to find evidence to answer the questions. Additionally, in a grade 7 ELA class, students were analyzing texts to write a claim and an essay. Students were provided with two different graphic organizers, access to laptop computers, and a video. However, when students discussed whether competitive sports should be in school, they spoke about which side they would take and did not state evidence to support it.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings
School leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and of planning to ensure that academic tasks emphasize rigorous and higher-order skills for all learners.

Impact
As a result, the school is beginning to make decisions to build curricular coherence and to work to plan tasks to be challenging, to provide access to all students, to prepare students for college and career, and to engage all learners across subjects and grades to elevate student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administration have been weaving together three programs for English Language Arts, *Code X*, *Teachers College Writing Program*, and *American Reading Company's* 100 Book Challenge. For math, teachers recently purchased *Connected Math Project 3* this year and are merging Glencoe math and supplementing units from *EngageNY* through support provided by the National Training Network (NTN). Administration stated that, "To reduce the two incompatible curricula, we hired an ELA coach to support bridging the curriculum gap and [are doing the same] for math by hiring NTN." However, the extended instructional cabinet has decided to employ the entire *TCRWP* for the next schoolyear as the sole program for ELA. Curricular plans show some evidence of weaving different programs, but the alignment is still in process.

- Teachers have begun to implement the workshop model approach to lesson planning. In some lesson plans, the elements include, but are not limited to, the Common Core Learning Standards, learning objective, teaching point, materials, meeting students' needs, opening, mini-lesson, mid-workshop interruption, wrap-up, exit slip, differentiation/modifications, and homework. Some lessons include other components such as a hook, introduction to new material, guided practice, and independent practice. Others include a Do Now, active engagement, link, work period, and share. A few lesson plans provide pre-planned questions for turn and talk discussions that spiral up Webb's *Depth of Knowledge*. However, the workshop model approach has not yet been implemented in planning across the school. Additionally, teachers are incorporating reading and writing across the curriculum so that science and social studies implement similar methods to write claims and counter-claims, as does the ELA department.

- Since the school's population consists of 28% English Language Learners (ELLs) and 29% students with disabilities, some lesson plans include detailed entry points to provide students with access to tasks that engage a diversity of learners. A few lessons include readings in Spanish for ELLs and leveled worksheets for struggling learners and students with disabilities, and one lesson with names listed for each. Some lessons state that there are leveled worksheets, but do not list for whom the worksheet is meant to support. Yet, there are other lessons that do not provide leveled entry for students, thus preventing their access to rigorous material. There are some lessons that note levels of students for groups, but do not list names or rationale for grouping. Others provide general modifications that are for all students, such as, "Sample of student work provided as a guide" and "table of contents modeled on board." Thus, student access is limited.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Developing

Findings
The school is developing in their use of common assessments to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subjects. Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments and rubrics that are loosely aligned with the curricula.

Impact
Feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement is limited and does not yet provide actionable feedback, while assessment results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff used *RALLY!* assessments as the Measures of Student Learning twice a year, in January 2016 and February 2016, to assess students' reading and math levels. Although the comparative data shows that some grades demonstrated an uptick in scores in this period, as in the comparison between grade 8 students, a closer examination showed there was an increase in math expressions and equations, functions, and geometry, but a decrease in statistics and probability. Similarly, in ELA, grade 6 demonstrated a decrease between assessment administrations for reading informational texts from 53% to 39% while meeting reading literature standards increased slightly from 49% to 51%.

- Based on the *RALLY!* ELA results, staff noted, "The ELA department shifted to focus on writing standards and created on-demand writing and writing tasks." Although staff spoke anecdotally about individual students, no comparative data was provided to show results from this shifted focus. Plus, staff, with support from the community-based organization, used the results of *RALLY!* assessments to inform the areas of need and focus on specific strands within unmet standards by grade level during the month-long Saturday school called "March Madness" in preparation for the New York State (NYS) assessments. Yet, no post-assessment was administered; instead staff awaits the NYS results. One teacher had data from the 100 Book Challenge, showing 16/25 students improved between the two of three assessments administered. Further, staff stated they use *iReady* and pre- and post-curricular assessments, but no data was provided to demonstrate achievement or used to adjust curricula and instruction during the school day.

- Although teachers use rubrics and checklists to help students understand next steps, these rubrics have limited usefulness because they are from a combination of programs and are not yet coherent. During student interviews, most students knew how to use a rubric or checklist to support their learning. Some students understood the feedback provided and how to reflect on next steps, while others either did not understand or did not receive feedback. A student read his teacher's feedback, "Great use of traits and evidence appropriate; next steps: re-read what you write and traits need help." Yet, the student did not understand saying, "It doesn't make sense. I'm not sure how to fix it. [I think] he tells me to write it over?" Thus, the feedback was not actionable. A teacher's note with his own grammatical errors, stapled to a student essay that received a 2.5, states, "Excellent! I love how their [sic] was textual evidence and also how you stick with your topic and claim. Next time please watch out for grammar, as I believe this would of [sic] made your essay easier to understand." Most student work receives a grade, checkmark, and a complimentary "great job," but often work in folders either received no score, a score and no feedback, or feedback but no score. A student said he received an essay score but no feedback, saying, "She doesn't usually [give feedback] unless it goes on the bulletin board."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Developing

Findings
High expectations are consistently communicated to staff via the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* The school leaders and staff are developing expectations connected to a path toward college and career readiness.

Impact
The school is developing a system of accountability regarding expectations amongst staff and is developing systems to provide families feedback towards understanding student progress toward those expectations.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers make contact with parents via phone, email, or in-person meetings. A few teachers have begun to communicate with families through Class Dojo, an online communication tool. Yet, a few parents stated that teachers have not consistently uploaded information. Even though the school held town hall meetings to inform families of their children's progress toward promotion, students stated that to find out how they are doing in class they ask teachers or the counselor or receive their report cards. However, students noted that the school previously used an electronic grade program with student and parent portals, but this is not currently in use. Students stated, "I want it back because I can know how I'm doing in class." Another student stated that it works, but teachers are not updating it. Parents also said they miss it. Additionally, most parents stated that they are not satisfied with the work that is coming home, "There are weeks of no homework, and the work is not challenging enough."

- The administration holds a monthly breakfast with the principal. The administration distributed a family handbook that delineates promotion requirements for students. A parent, whose child graduated two years ago, shared the support she received with the high school selection process through workshops, high school fairs and tours, and the completion of the school applications through the support of the guidance counselor. Students stated that they spoke with teachers with whom they have a connection. Others had family members who supported them in the selection process. As of the date of this review, there has yet to be a college and career experience for students. During Saturday instruction, while students were in class, parents attended workshops on supporting their children during testing, preventing test anxiety, and learning about the tests. But these were the only workshops to support children that parents discussed.

- Administration provides staff with consistent messages regarding expectations. For example, the principal sends "The Weekly Point" to all staff that includes a calendar of upcoming events, person of the week, new items, announcements, and ELA and math skills of the week. Additionally, administration set forth an instructional manual, which includes, but is not limited to, the use of the workshop model, a workshop model checklist, and sample workshop model. Administration also provides a staff handbook. A professional development calendar is updated according to teachers' needs. A system of follow-up includes frequent classroom observations, actionable feedback, and coaching from the instructional coach and assistant principals to support staff as they work towards the schoolwide achievement goals, but as yet there is little evidence of translation into practice.