



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

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**Blueprint Middle School**

**08X562**

**1111 Pugsley Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10472**

**Principal: Tyneka Harrington**

**Date of review: January 15, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Sheila S.-Gorski**

## The School Context

Blueprint Middle School is a middle school with 201 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 19% Black, 61% Hispanic, 2% White, and 17% Asian students. The student body includes 17% English language learners and 24% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92%.

## 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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</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>Additional Findings</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

The school ensures that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, making purposeful decisions across the subject areas and grades, and consistently emphasizing rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students.

### Impact

Teachers across the grades and disciplines work collaboratively to ensure the instructional shifts are integrated in units and lesson plans so that students meet the rigorous demands of the Common Core Learning Standards, thus promoting college and career preparation.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school implements Common Core aligned curriculum in all content areas. For example in the area of Humanities the school model is the Teachers College Reading & Writing Project (TCRWP). In math the school has chosen the Connected Mathematics Project (CMP3), and in science, project-based curricula aligned to Next Generation Science Standards coupled with TCRWP content area units ensure the Common Core alignment. Likewise, TCRWP social studies units, and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) levels require students to engage in deep reasoning. For instance an eighth grade math unit entitled, Butterflies, Pinwheels and Wallpaper addresses power standards such as: problem solving, precision and accuracy, interpretation and constructing. Students are required to justify why two figures are similar or not after a combination of transformations by experimenting with transformations and one dilation with a scale factor greater than or less than 1. The instructional plan includes an aim, do now mini-lesson, guided practice, independent practice and whole class discussion. Skill groups are data-based and planned using stations. One station includes a student group which engages in direct instruction from the teacher; in a second station students working independently and a third station engages a student group in guided work.
- Rigorous academic tasks are designed using the student's independent reading levels to scaffold and design tasks and instruction differentiated based on student assessment data. TC unit projects are used to model academic tasks and TC bends are utilized to create tasks. Teachers also use "authentic vocabulary," that is, content-area vocabulary from prior lessons that has been used in a variety of ways to ensure higher-level thinking for all students. Additionally, teachers encourage the instructional shifts via Blueprint's Vocabulary Program: Working Toward Mastery and the Math Fluency Program.
- A review of units of study and lesson plans indicates use of the DOK levels, scaffolds, the TC bends to create tasks and authentic vocabulary. There is also an emphasis on student writing pushing for opinion and argumentative writing. Teachers plan and assess student writing using the TCRWP Opinion/Writing Continuum. Lessons are also planned around structure, transitions, organization, elaboration, and presentation skills, such as eye contact and a clear speaking voice; skills that encourage college and career readiness.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

The use of entry points, scaffolds and questioning techniques and discussion across classrooms is evolving. Student participation and demonstration of thinking at high levels for a diversity of students is emerging.

### Impact

Across classrooms the use of scaffolds, questions and entry points to afford all learners opportunities to show their thinking is uneven, thus impeding a diversity of students from sharing their thinking at high levels.

### Supporting Evidence

- The School believes that students learn best in a focused, safe and orderly environment where students work together and collaboratively solve problems. As a result, the school's instructional focus leveraged by the Danielson Framework for Teaching (DfT) is based on, engaging students in learning. To encourage student engagement, teachers plan and execute, "Turn and Talk," discussion prompts, free write options and use texts based on student's reading levels. Teachers also create student partnerships in reading, math and science problem solving and differentiated learning stations.
- In most classrooms visited, students worked in partnerships or groups and were provided with procedural charts, and visuals. However, questions and tasks in some classrooms were generated by teachers, and most questions prompted one-word answers. Teachers also limited wait time for student responses and often moved quickly through lessons with multiple questions rapidly asked. For example, in a grade 7 English class students listened to the teacher speaking at length of the elements that may be included in a checklist. Students would use this checklist to improve their essay drafts. While the teacher asked questions to probe student thinking, such as, "What elements do you expect to be in the checklist?" student responses were basically one, or two-word answers. For instance, some answers were, "jot" and "memoirs" but the teacher moved on without requesting further elaboration. A few students provided answers such as, when a student was asked to repeat his peer's answer stated, "He said, 'spelling, punctuation and sentence structure'." Another stated, "I am going to ask, 'how did you get your evidence?'"
- Across classrooms student work products inconsistently reflected high levels of thinking. Some teachers afforded students opportunities to engage in conversations as in a grade 6 Humanities class. Students were learning about the first humans, Neolithic Revolution and the Early River Valley Civilizations. Using the SMART board the teacher posed the question, "How can we use our historical lenses to analyze Ancient Egypt?" Students created K-W-L charts writing what they knew about Ancient Egypt and what they would like to know and providing space for what they would later learn. Students worked in groups or partnerships, while the teacher conferred. It was noted that students were engaged, building upon each other's prior knowledge about Egypt. Some students wrote that after death people would be placed in a coffin and later in a pyramid. Other students wrote that they would like to know about the language spoken and how long it took to build a pyramid. Students would then watch a video as part of the new learning. While this level of thinking was noted in some classrooms it was uneven across the school.

## Additional Findings

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

Across the school common assessments and practices are used to monitor student progress toward goals. Data analysis is also used to make instructional adjustments.

### Impact

Assessment practices are used to track student goals via ongoing checks for understanding and self-assessments, resulting in effective adjustments to meet the needs of all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school uses TCRWP Benchmark Reading Levels to assess student reading levels four times per year between September and June. This ensures that the school is appropriately aligning independent reading texts to the student's reading level. Teachers also use reading level data to make decisions on instructional text selections. In subject areas the school uses beginning, mid and end of unit assessments.
- The school's baseline data indicates that students struggle with stating claims and using text-based evidence to support claims on short answer and extended response questions. As a result, teachers align the Blueprint Power Standards informed by Conley's Key Cognitive Strategies and college and career readiness research with their lessons. They closely monitor student progress toward goals via daily exit tickets aligned to learning objectives, evaluation of exit tickets to adjust follow up learning objectives and evaluation of exit tickets to decide on instructional groupings, on-demand writing assessments examining author's craft, symbolism and structural analysis.
- Teachers use an online system, Goalbook, to upload student portfolio data. Using Goalbook across the disciplines teachers can see skills in progress, collaborate on setting student goals, and speak to each other about student progress. This provides ongoing checks and collaborative adjustments to unit assessments and quizzes to assess students using various modalities but examining the same skill. During a teacher team meeting it was stated, "This provides our students opportunities to make interdisciplinary connections, even when the student work product may look different as they link the skill to whatever subject they are learning."
- Teacher assessment practices include question scaffolds to assess student listening and verbal skills and comprehension questions to check for understanding. An example from teacher's lesson plans includes, "What is the difference between a producer and a consumer?" In-class checks for understanding also include the use of daily exit tickets, quizzes and student-facing, or student use writing checklists. Students self-assess across content areas using a checklist aligned to a portfolio rubric to collect sample work products for their student portfolios to rate the work at ranges between 1 and 3. Also rated are presentation skills. Students go before a panel and answer portfolio questions with in-depth details regarding the academic progress made throughout the year.

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

School leaders communicate high expectations for instruction creating opportunities for professional growth and support. Teachers provide detailed feedback to students preparing them for the next level.

### Impact

School leaders communicate high expectations regarding professionalism and student achievement. Teachers and staff establish a culture for learning and guidance to prepare students for future academic endeavors.

### Supporting Evidence

- Communication begins with summer orientation during which the principal shares the school's values, culture and instructional practices. The faculty handbook and weekly professional development and team meetings reinforce the school's high expectations. The school has recently created a website ensuring that all constituencies are able to see events, important announcements and student activities. Internal communication that captures communication between the leadership and staff members is sustained via the Blueprint Intranet.
- The Blueprint News provides guidance of, for example, an outline of a typical Parent-Teacher Conference (PTC) It also makes announcements of school needs such as, "Looking for Parent Volunteers!" Other headlines include, "Blueprint Student Selected for Top Basketball Program" in recognition of a student who was selected to join the prestigious New York Gauchos! An invitation to join the Principal's Book Club is also advertised in the Blueprint with an article summarizing the book they are currently reading, *I Am Milala*. Teachers across grades and subject areas share student progress and goals and work collaboratively on ensuring an interdisciplinary approach toward academic success via the Goalbook online program establishing a system of collaboration and accountability to meet the school's expectations.
- Student orientation ensures that, at the onset, students understand the values, cultural norms and the school's high expectations. School values are posted all through the school, and value lessons are implemented during weekly class meetings. The school incorporates the Purpose. Actions. Winners. Shout. Outs Program (P.A.W.S), an Initiative taken in efforts to promote a focus on school values, and the use of claims and evidence. All teachers serve as grade advisors supported by the guidance counselor. They implement the use of a, Student Culture Rubric which measures, self-regulation in multiple ways and ranges in the context of, "Needs Improvement, Working Toward, Proficient, and Advanced." Restorative Justice is also implemented emphasizing the values of empathy, respect, and honesty acceptance and accountability, all of which support students as they embark on their next levels.

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

Teacher Teams use student work and data analysis to leverage instructional changes, making key decisions that affect the learning across the school.

### Impact

Teachers examine student work and data results to inform pedagogy, resulting in improved teacher practice and student progress toward goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams create action plans for students they have targeted in need of strengthening skills or for those exhibiting learning gaps across the grades. For example, during a team meeting the focus was on math where students were struggling with identifying the coefficient of a problem. While students knew linear relationships, they did not know why. After an analysis of student work, the team agreed that it was possible the question posed was unclear and that students could not identify the coefficient and its relationship to the ‘Y’ intercept. Subsequently, through team discourse, they reached consensus to simplify the questions, make an inquiry chart, “To Go,” depicting linear relationships with steps breaking down the parts and identifying the parts. Questions were simplified as such, “What is the ‘Y’ intercept?” “What does it mean?” It was also decided that when asking for an explanation in an exit slip, the task would need to be specific using a graph, table or equation.
- A protocol is used during meetings following an order that begins with the topic for the action plan, tailoring the instruction, teaching strategies and next steps, modeling, and differentiation. The team begins with the positives in the student work, what the student knows about the topic, the area of need and then the action plan. The team consistently analyzes two or three pieces representing high, mid and low work samples with the goal of bridging learning gaps.
- Teachers incorporate instructional adjustments in lessons and share them via the Goalbook, for all team members to see. All teachers across the content areas use shared strategies in their lessons to ensure that students are able to make connections linking, for example vocabulary across the disciplines. Lesson adjustments begin at the student’s independent level, meeting students where they are to provide students access into the curricula. Assessments and adjustments gradually support student progress toward goals.
- Teachers administered an assessment on a literary unit and results indicated that students were deficient in understanding literary elements. While students could read the text even with some fluency hesitations, they were unable to get to the writing aspect of the assessment. The data-analysis informed the team’s decisions to administer a beginning of the unit assessment to assess independent reading levels, design more writing answers prompts and ensure that all students were reading leveled texts.