# Quality Review Report

# 2015-2016

**Baychester Middle School**

**Middle School X532**

**3750 Baychester Avenue**
**Bronx**
**NY 10466**

**Principal: Shawn Mangar**

**Date of review: January 8, 2016**
**Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción**

# The School Context

Baychester Middle School is a middle school with 301 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 68% Black, 27% Hispanic, and 1% White students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 22% students with disabilities. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 92.5%.

# School Quality Criteria

| Instructional Core | | |
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| *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 | **Celebration** | **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 *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 | **Additional Findings** | **Developing** |

## Area of Celebration

| 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, integrate the instructional shifts, and promote college and career readiness for all students. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

**Impact**
The use of the Common Core aligned curricula promotes the development of higher order thinking skills resulting in students being exposed to materials aligned with college and career readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**
- A review of the curricula and unit maps indicates that the school uses the *Engage NY* curriculum for mathematics and English Language Arts across the grades. It uses material from Next Generation Science Standards in its science program and includes supplemental material from the Achievement Network.

- A recent unit focused on text from *The Windy City and* had tasks that aligned to the standards. For example, tasks centered on examining how the author's word choice conveys the theme. The inclusion of instructional shifts, such as, the use of close reading strategies were embedded in the unit plans.

- In a grade 8 mathematics unit on *the geometric* concept of "transformations" higher order thinking skills were evident. For example, the learning objective centered on the understanding of the rotation of a set of points. Students needed to understand figures in two dimensions and describe the congruence between them. In addition, all students were required to understand the rotation and reflection of these figures on a graph. Tasks that required the use of specific information to support mathematical arguments were embedded throughout the unit. One task required the learners to cite the facts related to the angle and the sum of the exterior angles of triangles and required knowledge of angle criteria.

- The school uses the Next Generation Science Standards across all grades. A review of this document shows that the curriculum builds on each grade. For example, students study weather and the water cycle in grade 6 and these concepts are revisited and continued in grades 7 and grade 8 when students extend this learning to include the study of weather maps and contour maps in addition to understanding air masses as a means of predicting the weather.

- A grade 7 fiction unit focuses on two stories related to slavery and the Underground Railroad. This unit asks students to analyze the similarities and the differences in the points of view of the passages. Students need to write an informative essay and use evidence from the text to state how the description from the narrator's point of view affects the reader's understanding of the characters, the conflict and plot.

## Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**

Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula. Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

**Impact**

These inconsistent teaching strategies result in uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products including the work of English language learners and students with disabilities.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In a literacy class where student were reading the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, they were asked to watch the movie of the same title and compare it to the novel. The teacher instructed the students on how movie directors used the camera to film panoramic views or close up to focus on characters. Students watched a portion of the film and completed a graphic organizer. No scaffolds for English language learners or students with disabilities were apparent. A review of the organizers revealed a series of depth of knowledge level one questions such as "What does Atticus take to provide light outside the jailhouse?" followed by a box labeled "text" and another box labeled "movie". The majority of student responses were simple answers, for example, one student wrote "an extension cord" in the box that said "text" and "lamp" in the box labeled movie.

- In a science class students were observed struggling to put together a circuit in order to light a small light bulb. Six out of eight groups were unable to make the circuit work and their light bulbs did not light. When asked what directions had been provided to assemble the circuit, students shared that they had been given the materials and simply told to make the circuit work and answer the questions. A review of the worksheet that students were given asked students to consider if there could have been more than one energy transfer occurring and explain the energy sources. Since many students did not have working circuits and were provided with limited time to gather information, the question was answered by only a few students and many students missed the opportunity to think critically. One student stated that the battery provided chemical energy and the power transfer included thermal, radiant and mechanical energy.

- A social studies class focusing on President Hoover and the Great Depression was largely teacher directed. The teacher asked a series of rapid, low level questions such as "Who is in charge of the economy?", "What did President Hoover do?"; "What happened?" The teacher asked leading questions and provided frequent prompts to help students respond that the president's trickle down economy was not effective. Student to student interaction and discussion was limited during the lesson. After many unsuccessful attempts to elicit answers from the students, the teacher told the students the information.

- A review of student work products showed simple sentences and basic ideas. For example, one student report, about contaminated drinking water in a third world country, exhibited minimal student writing with only three to four simple sentences beneath large pictures from the internet.

## Additional Findings

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations including the elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching.* School leaders and staff are developing systems to provide feedback to families regarding student progress toward meeting those expectations.

**Impact**

School leaders provide teachers with actionable feedback based on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*; however, the focus of the feedback remains focused on student behavior thus limiting improvement in instructional practice. There are missed communication opportunities for students and families around a path to college and career readiness and understanding about student progress towards those expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- A review of teacher observations reveals a focus on feedback on student behavior. For example, one observation stated, "For your next lesson write out what students, as well as yourself, will do at each 30 second increment, and what will happen with non-compliant students." Another observation had limited feedback on instructional competencies and most of the feedback dealt with student behaviors, an example from that report referred to the teacher saying, "you lost two points for talking."

- In the parent meeting, parents shared that the teachers are very supportive, helpful and kind with regard to social and emotional matters, but they feel that the instruction at the school lacks rigor. Many parents cited the fact that their students receive very little homework or projects. They stated that many of the students write only a few sentences when answering a prompt or an essay and this does not prepare students for high school.

- Parents stated that outside of the initial orientation that their incoming student received in grade 6, the school did not inform them of getting ready for the next grade. Parents of grade 8 students stated that they did not know that attendance was such an important factor in the high school admission process and as such their children had many absences. They also voiced that they had not known that high schools looked at grade 6 and grade 7 performance as criteria for admission and they did not focus on student grades at this time nor did they receive counseling on improving grades. As such, parents thought grade 8 was the year to have a strong finish. Consequently, their students' grades were too low to get into the high school of their choice. Many parents wanted their students to attend specialized high schools. Parents explained that they learned from parents at other schools that they are able to reapply to their high school of choice in grade 9 after their child improves their performance. Parents stated that they have shared this with the principal. The school is developing a clear communication system so parents will have the necessary information needed for students to be prepared for high school as well as the next level.

| Quality Indicator: | 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**
The school is developing their use of common assessments. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**
The school has documents and practices in place for assessing students and the curricula. However, these documents are used infrequently and the results of these assessments are not consistently used to adjust and refine curricula and instruction thus, limiting student learning and performance.

**Supporting Evidence**
- The school uses a template to develop a small group action plan to make modifications to instruction for a targeted group of students. A review of this document shows that English Language Learners have been identified and need re-teaching. For example, one template identifies a group of students who are struggling with the book *To Kill A Mockingbird*. However, only one ELL student is identified as receiving extra support. Other students, while listed as needing extra support, are listed as "will do the same work as rest of class." The modification for the one ELL student is to read an adaptive version of the text in English and answer English text dependent questions.

- Students and teachers stated that students are assessed and there is a re-teaching period. However, no specificity on the skill or concept to be reviewed and re-taught was identified in the classrooms visited.

- Checklists are partially aligned to the Common Core Standards and provide students with feedback. For example, one criterion on the "success chart" for a performance task comparing Martin Luther King Junior to Alvin Ailey was aligned to the standards. Teachers checked off four criteria related to the answer. One criterion offered feedback such as "Great job answering all qualities of the prompt and organizing your thoughts. Push yourself by checking spelling and adding details." Yet, feedback to students on a another math task that did not have a checklist or rubric stated "Nice" and "Good" minimizing the students' opportunities to know how to progress to the next level.

- While many handouts contained a "criteria for success" chart or a "self-evaluation checklist" listed on the body of worksheets, these were not observed in use by either students or teachers in six out of the seven rooms visited. In one class where they were observed in use, students were to read each other's short responses and provide peers with feedback. A review of the peer assessment forms demonstrated limited feedback by the students. For example, one of the questions students had to rate a peer on was "Did the student chose a quote that clearly supported the central idea?" and the box next to this question allowed students to circle yes or no. One student left this space blank on her peer's paper. When asked why she had not circled yes or no to this question, the student shared that she did not know the central idea herself and could not provide an answer to her peer.

- Across classes visited while there was reference to exit slips as part of the lesson, this practice of assessment was not observed in the majority of classes.

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Developing |
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**Findings**

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations that are loosely connected to the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures are developing to allow for teacher's voice in school decisions.

**Impact**

Teacher team meetings focus primarily on the social emotional matters of the students resulting in a narrow academic conversation. This work does not consistently result in improved teacher practice or progress towards goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- There was a large turnover in teaching staff and many of the teachers are new and developing their knowledge of content and the Common Core Learning Standards. In one teacher team meeting teachers stated that they are looking at *Engage NY* and together they are unpacking the lessons to become acquainted with the mathematical practices. The teachers also stated that they were looking at English Language Arts units and learning how to plan for rigorous tasks and appropriate assessments for the lessons.

- At one teacher team meeting teachers shared that they wanted to standardize their practice by grade and share with other teachers. However, as the conversation continued, it was apparent that they were talking about behavior expectations such as incentives and wearing hoodies. The conversation then shifted to the use of "silent lunches".

- During the teacher team observation, the teachers read an article on *Common Core Math: Digging into Math Content Standards and understanding their Relationship with SMP (Standards for Math Practices)*. Teachers looked at the math practices and began to focus on what students should know and be able to do to be successful with the conceptual and procedural understanding of mathematics. Teachers engaged in a conversation about the importance of their understanding of the standards. They shared that if they did not understand the Common Core Standards and the required math practices they would not be able to teach it properly thus, preventing students from producing proficient mathematics work products.

- Teachers shared that they are beginning to collaborate with the principal on developing agendas for advisory and department team meetings. The advisory items that they mentioned focused on ways for students to follow rules.