Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Young Diplomats Magnet Academy

Elementary M242

134 West 122 Street
NY 10027

Principal: Denise Gomez

Date of review: January 14, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Sandra Litrico
The School Context

Young Diplomats Magnet Academy is an elementary school with 220 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 67% Black, 27% Hispanic, 3% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91.1%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Area of Celebration

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Teacher teams engage in collaborative practice using the inquiry approach to improve curricular, teaching and learning.

Impact
Thoughtful adjustments are made to curricular to increase common core alignment and the implementation of the instructional shifts. This has led to improved student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are involved in focused teacher teams that use professional structures and protocols to examine student work and assessment data. The fourth grade teacher team looked at the pre-assessment of the opinion writing unit. Based on the Grade 4 New York City (NYC) Baseline performance task they divided the students into high, medium, and low groups. They collaboratively determined what the next steps were for each group of students and developed lessons and scaffolds to meet their needs.

- Teacher teams engage in grade level collaborations during weekly common planning. These planning meetings provide the time for teachers to look at student work through the use of a tuning protocol, review formative and summative data, share best practices and ensure instructional cohesiveness. They create new lessons and instructional strategies to improve student achievement. Teachers use the writing standards, exemplars, and rubrics to determine where the students should be and plan steps to get them there. As a result, the quality of student writing has improved.

- The principal promotes shared responsibility and ownership for the work of the school by empowering teacher leadership. Teachers make adjustments to curriculum units and create 4 to 6 week inquiry-based units of study, which supplement the Ready Gen curriculum. Teachers also conduct professional development activities and take leadership roles on various shared decision making teams.
Area of Focus

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
Although assessments and rubrics are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and used across classrooms, there is little actionable feedback provided to students in terms of clear next academic steps to increase student progress.

Impact
While in some classrooms, teachers used ongoing assessment practices to check for student understanding and make adjustments, most classrooms were typified by irregular “spur of the moment” assessments that didn’t allow the teachers to effectively make adjustments to meet student learning needs. As a result some students are not making adequate progress toward state standards.

Supporting Evidence

- Student understanding of a lesson’s objective is not assessed in a manner that clearly demonstrates whether or not the child has mastered the concept. A case in point is the chapter review math lesson. The objective was “students will be able to show mathematical thinking to solve 2 digit addition problems through center work”. The assessment was the chapter 4 checklist which was generic and did not assess student understanding of the day’s lesson.

- Although teachers repeatedly ask questions, many do not analyze student responses as a check for understanding. This hinders teacher’s ability to make timely and effective adjustments so that students receive daily feedback and are able to master concepts and further their own learning.

- While some teachers track results, their approach is limited to identifying the needs of individual students. All teachers are not consistently using the data to make needed changes to the curriculum across content areas student groupings and their instructional practices.

- The math problem solving rubric assists students in self-assessing their understanding of concepts and applications. Teachers also use rubrics to provide written feedback to students but the feedback is not always meaningful or specific.
**Additional Findings**

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Curriculum is aligned to CCLS and there is coherence across grades and subject areas. Curricula are refined so that a diversity of learners has access to the curricula and tasks.

**Impact**

Student data and work products are used to refine curriculum in a holistic way, but remaining work has to be done to tailor academic tasks for the lowest and highest achieving students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school utilizes Pearson’s *Ready Gen* for English Language Arts (ELA) and *Go Math* programs as resources for instruction to ensure common core alignment. During grade level planning, these units are supplemented with activities and questions that incorporate the instructional shifts. The inquiry based projects support the curriculum framework which is aligned to the Ready Gen curriculum. For example, in grade three Unit 1 “How we Organize Ourselves”, students engage in a geography inquiry through research and collect information about a location in order to create a visual representation.

- Multiple entry points are provided for tasks and a variety of tools including graphic organizers and templates are included in the units to provide instruction and conceptual understanding. Technology also supports the curriculum and provides access for all learners. Imagine Learning, a computerized reading program, is used to support English language Learners and students with disabilities with a focus on phonics and word study. As an International Baccalaureate World School, students learn through inquiry based learning and conduct research using the internet. This inquiry based process exposes all students to learning habits and skills that support academic readiness.

- Unit plans include goals, standards, enduring understandings, essential questions and a learning plan with lesson objectives. Initial, formative and final assessments are embedded as checks for understanding. There are also rubrics and checklists.
Findings
Across classrooms teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricular. Student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact
There is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of critical thinking skills in student discussion and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- Some teachers prepare lessons that target the specific needs and strengths of students and employ strategies that address a range of student abilities. However, this is not the case in every class visited. For example, although the school focus is on questioning and discussion, most teachers dominated the lessons with frontal teaching, whole class reading and posed questions that did not engage students in rich discussions. Most of the questions were low level literal questions.

- Although students sit in groups, teachers do not always use formative data to develop appropriately challenging tasks for individual students. The first grade classroom did set up reading centers based on student goals. However, lesson plans indicated that all students would rotate through these stations. The tasks and student work products in these centers reflected an uneven demonstration of higher order thinking for higher-level students.

- One group of students in an Integrated-Co teaching (ICT) classroom was assigned nonfiction books to read and asked to find the setting of the story. The lower functioning group was assigned independent work they could not complete. In the 4th grade classroom the research activity on natural disasters earthquakes did not include the use of technology.

- The 2nd grade ICT math lesson had students solving multi step word problems using graphic organizers to show their work and explain their strategies. They also had to tell why all other answers presented were wrong. It was very interactive as students worked in groups to share strategies and solve problems. Modifications and manipulatives were available. However, most teachers do not yet plan lessons that allow for sufficient student engagement in higher order thinking and in most classrooms students are asked to complete the same tasks. As a result, meaningful work products that stretch the thinking of all students are not evident school wide.
**Quality Indicator:** 3.4 High Expectations  
**Rating:** Proficient

### Findings
The staff, students and parents share and demonstrate high expectations for improving student achievement and provide supports to achieve those expectations.

### Impact
There is a highly supportive environment where school staff shares the schools high expectations for attendance, learning and behavior clearly with parents and students.

### Supporting Evidence
- The principal articulated that the school community believes that a positive school culture is essential to the success of their students. As an International Baccalaureate school, they have embedded the IB attributes into their units of study to provide tasks that are of interest to students. They have promoted shared responsibility in their teacher teams and involve families as partners in education.

- The school has many events that support a positive learning environment including a “Celebration of Learning“ where parents are able to visit their child’s classroom during student presentations on the first Friday of every month. Awards are presented to students during monthly awards Assemblies and include recognition for outstanding effort, attribute of the month and perfect attendance. Students that are able to follow their schools essential agreements such as wearing their school uniform, completing homework and making good decisions are rewarded with a monthly celebration.

- All grade level teams are responsible for submitting a blurb that includes information about the current units of study in all content areas and any upcoming events. Monthly progress reports are provided for parents to be informed of their child’s progress.