Quality Review Report

2015-2016

P.S. Q811
K-12 School Q811
61-25 Marathon Parkway
Queens
NY 11362

Principal: Penny Ryan

Date of review: February 10, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Robin Cohen
The Marathon School is a K-12 school with 420 students from kindergarten through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 17% Asian, 32% Black, 31% Hispanic, and 16% White students. The student body includes 22% English Language Learners and 99% students with disabilities. Boys account for 68% of the students enrolled and girls account for 32%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 87.8%.

## School Quality Criteria

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</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>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<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>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<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>Well Developed</td>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</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>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

<table>
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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings
Commensurate with school leaders consistently communicated high expectations, are professional development opportunities provided to support staff, and college and career readiness skills for students, fostering a culture of high expectations for all members of the school community.

Impact
Structures that support the school’s high expectations result in, effective academic and personal growth of students and adults in a culture of mutual accountability.

Supporting Evidence
- At the beginning of every school year, school leaders distribute and review the staff handbook that delineates expected classroom practices and management strategies. School leaders articulate high expectations through written and verbal communication, and work with staff members on teams, such as designing workshops, choosing curricula, and developing a strong Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) program. School leaders provide professional development opportunities for staff and college and career learning options for students. This fosters a culture of mutual accountability for all members of the school.

- School leaders and staff work as a team in study groups reviewing potential curricula and planning and designing professional development workshops. Staff members must submit written feedback to inform future professional development activities. The school provides ongoing professional development using the Danielson Framework for Teaching. In line with the school-wide focus on vocational training, emphasis is placed on setting instructional outcomes and using questioning and discussion techniques. Based on observations and self-reflection, teachers are scheduled for inter-visitation. Teachers use an inter-visitation protocol noting observed strategies. A new teacher stated she was having difficulty managing student behavior transitioning to morning meeting. She observed a colleague using First/Then charts and a class-designed behavior contract.

- High expectations for class work and behavior are modeled by staff seen in classrooms visited. Staff provides focused feedback on academic and social-emotional learning. Positive affirmations are posted and students are consistently reminded of academic and behavioral expectations. Skills such as self-awareness and self-management are actively taught, thereby addressing college and career readiness skills. A 12:1:1 high school student wrote an article about his Travel Training experience, allowing him to become independent. He wrote of his parent’s initial fear; however, they ultimately stated that he was “old enough to travel independently and not continue on the school bus.” “Traveling on my own is the biggest success in my school history.”

- Students participate in their Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting to determine and validate ownership of their educational experience and exhibit their independence. During the 2014-2015 school year, 13 students moved to a Less Restrictive Environment (LRE), the projected number for the 2015-2016 school year is 15 students. In addition, an analysis of Students Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI) and IEP data from fall 2014 to fall, 2015 shows 77% of students mastered their vocational skills. Student council provides a voice for students to address social and behavioral issues.
Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**
Across the vast majority of classrooms, the school uses common assessments, rubrics, and checklists aligned to its curricula to analyze student work, and offer a clear portrait of student progress. Teachers’ assessment practices consistently reflect the varied use of ongoing checks for understanding across all classrooms.

**Impact**
The school prioritizes a focus on extending the strategic creation and use of varied assessments for ongoing, in-depth analysis of student performance and continued adjustments to curricula and classroom practices that increase student achievement. Student self-assessment tools and meaningful feedback guide instructional decisions and provide clear learning goals for all students.

**Supporting Evidence**
- A variety of meaningful feedback is provided to students from teachers and peers during and at the conclusion of each lesson. Feedback is given in various forms due to each student’s receptive, expressive and cognitive understanding. For example, in classroom visits, feedback was observed verbally, social praising (high fives), the use of tangibles (stickers, reinforcers, tokens), and written feedback with next steps.

- Teachers articulate coherent reasons for assessment choices which are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. For example, in one classroom visit, all students were non-verbal and the teacher used an assessment that incorporates Picture Exchange Communication (PECs) symbols to analyze student learning. These choices provide a range of daily, monthly, and quarterly data to adjust instruction and monitor student growth. In another classroom visited, the teacher and student were reviewing the student’s work product and together completed the daily point sheet. Further, teachers expressed extending the evaluation of student growth by analyzing the impact of students’ participation in various programs.

- Across classrooms, ongoing checks for understanding included cold call, student checklists, thumbs-up/down, exit slips, and 1:1 conferencing. Teachers’ notes show assessments lead to instructional adjustments. Adjustments observed included extended time in guided reading groups, rephrasing of academic vocabulary, and the use of iPads. Students were given time to self-assess and “talk to their partner”, with paraprofessional prompting as needed. The school’s data collection sheets include noting the form of prompting used (gestural, verbal, and physical) and the frequency. Teacher feedback observed during class visits was both actionable and meaningful. During a history lesson, a student struggled with the question “What can we learn from peace keepers?” The teacher suggested the student and his partner role-play and think about essential questions to ask one another.

- Across classrooms, student binders include all assessment data, both academic and behavior, and student work samples. Teachers use data to identify students’ area of need, and establish class-wide instructional foci, and determine next steps such as subsequent lesson planning with the inclusion of additional aids and supports. Students use rubrics and checklists constructed by teacher teams and aligned to their curricula. In a class for students with autism, a student was sharing his work on summarizing a newspaper article. The student used his communication device to indicate what he had done well, finding the main idea and what he needed to improve upon, finding more details.
## Additional Findings

### Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum
### Rating: Well Developed

### Findings
All curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and tactically integrate the instructional shifts. The school continues to deepen, expand, and refine their curriculum maps and units of study to ensure a range of learning experiences for all students.

### Impact
Strategic curricular decisions build coherence across grades and subject areas that are cognitively appropriate and challenging, engaging all students in academics and life skills. All students have access to curricula and tasks that are relevant, foster and support student independence, academic and behavioral growth, and college and career readiness skills.

### Supporting Evidence
- The school has invested in Common Core-aligned *Unique Learning System (ULS)* for the alternate assessment population as its primary curriculum for all grade bands, ensuring instructional cohesion across all sites. The inclusion students use the same materials as their peers and prepare for Regents exams. The school created a curriculum team to focus on refining and adapting *ULS* to meet the needs of their diverse student population. The team looks at student work products and teacher input to ensure all students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. As a result of the aligned curricula, SANDI data reveals 44% of alternate assessment students showed improvement in English language arts (ELA) and 56% made progress in math.

- Throughout all classroom visited, emphasis was noted in making content relative to real life situations, addressing the school-wide focus on vocational training. The school's transition curricula, *Unique*, ensures the progression of skills. The school uses levels I and II vocational assessment data, SANDI data, and student vocational survey data indicating their interests to form classes. All classes at the main site provide pre-vocational training from the 18 school-based worksites such as: Building Maintenance, Composting, Bicycle Repair, and Cafe Service. During an integrated content area lesson, students demonstrated their employability skills such as; work, social, and hygiene habits. Students rotated through the three groups: supplies, food preparation, and budgeting. This assured exposure to various concepts. Presently, there are 29 community-based worksites where students receive a stipend, and 17 students are travel trained showing a 30% increase.

- The school’s belief of assuring access for all students is embedded in all lesson planning. Entry points for students is a collaborative decision-making approach that strategically focuses on the individual elements of a lesson, while considering the learning styles, interests, and readiness skills. In a 12:1:4 high school class, students were learning how to “Make Paper” and comprehend the concept of recycling. Lesson objectives were differentiated to support the three groups. Joint Action Routines (JARs) were utilized to increase student communication with peers and reduce adult prompting.
Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
Teaching practices across the vast majority of classrooms reflect a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best as informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching practices provide multiple entry points, high quality supports and extensions into the curricula.

Impact
Widespread teacher collaboration and discussions have fostered coherent, Common Core-aligned curricula. Teaching strategies engage all students in challenging tasks that meet the needs of all students to produce meaningful work products.

Supporting Evidence
- Classroom instruction and lesson planning include differentiated activities and multiple entry points through leveled texts, manipulatives, visuals and graphic organizers, and assistive technology. The school community believes students learn best by being engaged in purposeful lessons that directly relate to their lives and include embedded opportunities to engage in conversations with adults and peers. In a 6:1:1 kindergarten class, students were reading “Goldilocks and the Three Bears.” After the read-aloud, students were learning how to make porridge by following a recipe. The teacher said “We are going to read a recipe for making porridge. Your job is to work with your partners to help me name the tools and ingredients we need.” The teacher utilized visual aids: the interactive whiteboard, reproduced pictures from the story, picture/word cards and First/Then boards. The lesson called for three groups: level 1 students selected a picture of the ingredient named, level 2 students used pictures to compare ingredients, and level 3 students followed the order sequentially using picture word cards.

- Teaching practices across classrooms visited reflect the consistent use of strategies and scaffolds providing students with multiple entry points. Teachers use schedule boards, Mayer Johnson Symbols, Picture Exchange Communication (PEC) symbols, JARs, Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), and technology (iPads and iTouch). During a 12:1:4 high school class, the targeted skill was to determine what the text stated explicitly and cite specific textual evidence. Non-verbal students used their Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices, and PEC symbols to express their thoughts.

- The school stresses the push-in model for related service providers. Classroom teachers and speech teachers collaborate in designing lessons to encourage and support students in developing appropriate social interactions with peers and work collaboratively with peers in a group. For example, in an 8:1:1 high school class, the speech teacher facilitated a group during morning meeting to build communication skills such as: taking turns, waiting, and working collaboratively with peers in a group.

- In an 8:1:1 elementary class (grades 3-5) for students with autism, the teaching point was to demonstrate how plants and trees have basic needs by exploring seeds, soil, and water needed to make a plant grow. The lesson was differentiated to support the varied levels of the students. Students located pictures of objects, sorted objects into categories, or independently planted seeds in a pot and began to chart progress of growth. In addition, the teacher reproduced the book, “My How to Plant Vegetable Seeds”, to meet the three levels needs of the students.
Findings
All teachers participate in inquiry-based Professional Learning Communities (PLC) that consistently examines data and student work. Leadership structures are embedded so that there is effective teacher leadership regarding curricula and teaching practices.

Impact
Professional collaborations continuously strengthen teacher practice ensuring a shared commitment to attaining school goals resulting in school-wide instructional coherence and increased student progress. Teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence
- Teacher teams meet at least twice weekly and are grouped according to grade bands, academic content areas, and student populations. Teacher teams use student work samples and focus on the rigor of the tasks, how lessons are differentiated to engage all students and the levels of questioning used by the teachers. The teams use an adapted version of the Tuning Protocol to guide teachers in discovering what students understand and how they are thinking.

- An inquiry team was formed to address the Advance component of questioning and discussion techniques for the 12:1:4 (multiply handicapped) student population. The group meets twice weekly and has researched the best approaches to support this population. Presently, the school has implemented the utilization of JARS routines, daily calendar and vocational routines. SANDI assessment results indicate the need to focus and increase communication skills.

- The curriculum team reviews and updates curriculum maps, culminating tasks, and scoring rubrics, embedding the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts into teaching practices. Teachers stated as a direct result of professional collaboration such as lesson study and looking at student work, there is a strong coherent focus across the school on increasing student-led discussions. Teachers plan collegial visitations that results in strengthened pedagogical practices. Teachers stated that observing colleagues use certain strategies, such as the double bubble-thinking map, enables the staff to use these strategies in their own classrooms.

- The school was placed on the “Persistently Dangerous List” because of the number of weighted incidents during the 2013-2014 school year. The school created a behavioral intervention inquiry team to monitor students who were physically aggressive and develop effective behavioral supports. Presently, participating teachers collect data on a daily basis and design strategies to reduce weighted incident. There is collaboration with the Institute for Behavior Research; as a result of this effort, the school has been removed from the Persistently Dangerous List.

- Leadership structures are embedded within the school's day-to-day operation. During the teacher team meeting, teachers articulated how they are active members of the school community by serving as mentors, coaches, and liaisons between the school and community partners, providing workshops and choosing appropriate curriculum to meet students' academic and social needs.