Quality Review Report

2017-2018

New Millennium Business Academy Middle School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X328
1000 Teller Avenue
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Dorald Bastian

Dates of Review:
May 22, 2018 - May 23, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Robin Posner
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

New Millennium Business Academy Middle School serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflecting a coherent set of beliefs that students learn best when they are able to work collaboratively and tap into both their creative and academic skill sets. Across the same classrooms, teaching strategies strategically provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports, discussed at the team and school levels.

Impact

Teaching practices across the vast majority of classes reflect school beliefs that students learn best when teachers require them to work with their peers toward a common goal, accessing creative and academic skills and talents along the way. Strategies additionally ensure that all learners are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, students worked in book clubs to identify two characters in their books and what is it about particular character traits that makes these two characters intersect in both positive and negative ways. The teacher helped the students to review different traits and how and why they intersect or collide. The teacher provided examples of each trait with a real-world connection for clear understanding. Questioning during the lesson specifically asked students to find textual evidence to support their theory of why different traits intersect, and to engage in discussions with their groups. Students did not share their individual answers, but instead shared out their group’s thinking and then called on other students who wanted to volunteer to continue the student-centered discussion. One student read an example directly from the text and explained why the group thought this supported their theory. Student groups gave each other glows and grows on their use of text-based evidence to support their theories.

- During a Theatre Arts lesson, students performed skits as other students assessed overall successes of the performance and determined areas of growth, as well as areas in need of further development aligned to State Standards for the Arts Performance Rubric. Students were divided into three groups: multiple entry points were demonstrated through performance as the teacher asked the students to take on different roles within the skits to illustrate successful excerpts and areas in need of further growth. The teacher facilitated from the back of the class. All student eyes were on the performers, as students performed their parts of the piece. As students passionately displayed their work, they demonstrated full-group knowledge of the skits and their individual roles in them. In addition, content-specific teacher teams including special education teachers examine student work to ensure that students work collaboratively during tasks, and that both differentiation and supports for all students are aligned to tasks.

- In a grade-six math class, students collected data from classmates about their shoe sizes. The students worked in collaborative groups to collect the data, organize it and prepare a display using multiple models to represent their data set that would be presented during a gallery walk. During the lesson, multiple students participated in the discussion as they were answering higher-order thinking questions posed such as “How would data change if we brought in five second graders or five basketball players?” Or “How can we use our data to guess the shoe sizes of a larger population like the whole grade or the whole school?” Strategic peer support was provided, like pairing students with high-level English competence with ELLs and strong math students with weaker students during group work and targeted support from the teacher during individualized work time. Specific learners, identified by name in the lesson plan, received differentiated supports such as vocabulary support for words with multiple meanings, sentence starters, word banks, and visual support via interactive white boards to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills.
Area of Focus

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use content-specific rubrics and grading policies that are aligned with the curricula. Teachers and staff use baseline, benchmark, and pre- and post-unit assessment data to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact

Although teachers use feedback from assessment data and student work to make adjustments to curricula and instruction and provide students with actionable feedback on their academic progress, not all feedback to students is meaningful and not all students demonstrate increased mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas, samples of student work products showed teacher-written actionable feedback. For example, teacher feedback on an opinion writing assignment included, “You stated a claim and gave strong evidence to support it. Your conclusion brings it all together and incorporates the idea of believing in yourself no matter what. Next time, we will work on elaborating your ideas.” In a sixth-grade class, teacher feedback on an argument writing task included, “Try using all of the documents provided. Using the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation in your introduction would really strengthen the intro.” A student reported, “I got feedback from my teacher about a paragraph I wrote and that I needed to work on my conclusion. So, I rewrote my conclusion to make it better.” While there were multiple examples of actionable feedback observed and students spoke about being able to make revisions on assignments to increase their scores, no students were able to articulate how feedback from teachers meaningfully improved their overall learning styles.

- Teachers use data from assessments and student work to provide students with actionable feedback verbally, and in notes and revisions to student work. Some teachers hold one-on-one conferences with students to review their work and provide feedback to students. Students use conference goals to implement new strategies in their work. A review of student work provided evidence that most students apply teacher-recommended strategies and next steps in their work. Students shared that when they think they have met their goals they can request a meeting with the teacher to determine next steps and to set new goals. However, students shared that they do not always understand the feedback they get resulting in some feedback not being meaningful to students.

- Leadership and faculty use baseline, benchmark, and pre- and post-unit assessment data to determine student progress toward goals. Teachers use beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year math assessments, running records, and on-demand writing assessments to monitor progress toward goals in ELA and math. A review of unit and lesson plans demonstrated that teachers use common assessment data to make adjustments to curricula and revise lesson plans. This year, teachers have revised the ELA curricula to include additional lessons on evidence-based writing. Lesson plans reviewed, highlight student assignments matched to tiered instructional groups based on assessment data. A math lesson included additional plans for struggling students as well as projected fast finishers. However, not all students demonstrate increased mastery.
## Additional Finding

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

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to align the curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and content standards. Faculty plan and revise curricula and academic tasks using student work.

### Impact

The alignment of the ELA and math curricula from grade six to grade eight builds coherence across the grades. Revisions to tasks provide access for a diversity of learners and engage all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership makes purposeful decisions to ensure the alignment of the curricula to Common Core and content standards. The decision was made by school leadership to fully integrate *Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* and to use the *EngageNY* math curriculum. This is the first year of full implementation in all three grades. These two adjustments build coherence in the ELA and math curricula across grade six through grade eight. Curriculum maps and unit plans reviewed across content areas provide evidence of alignment to the Common Core. Teachers design and review learning opportunities with the purpose of strengthening the connection between vocabulary development, reading and writing, as well as content knowledge across all curricular areas. Across lessons, including integrated co-teaching and general education classes, there is evidence of the instructional shifts, specifically finding text-based answers, vocabulary use, writing from different sources, fluency and deep understanding.

- Academic vocabulary is used among staff and the modeling of this practice ensures students are building their ELA and math academic vocabulary. Unit plans in literacy, writing, and math illustrate multiple ways to present academic tasks which integrate instructional shifts with a variety of entry points for all students. For example, one lesson plan called for students to cite evidence from a text and use graphic organizers and a sight-word list to accomplish their assignments. Another lesson plan asked for students to complete an exit ticket by explaining how they solved a math problem using math vocabulary such as mean, center and variation in their responses.

- All students are expected to reach a certain benchmark and interventions and supports, such as small group pull-outs and push-ins and individual tutoring, are provided to students to meet their goals along the continuum. Individual learning plans for specific bands of students within a unit contain scaffolds such as video clips, frontloading of vocabulary, anchor charts, laptops, and sentence stems to ensure that all learners have access to the curricula and task.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders consistently communicate and model high expectations for staff through use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, with a focus on using a variety of questions, assessments, and feedback. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all students.

Impact
Communication structures around high expectations results in a system of accountability for staff. High expectations for all students are maintained and supported through effective guidance and feedback so that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- During the student meetings, multiple students offered examples of how they thought their middle school was preparing them for the next level in their education. Several students spoke to their advanced standings and the advanced work they get in class. In addition, the school offers multiple opportunities for college-related exposure and an exploration of college and high school expectations. All students have visited at least one college, including one nearby and one requiring an overnight stay. All students also spoke about high school fairs and targeted high school visits as being part of their experience in the school, along with tutoring for the specialized high school exam and help with the applications. A student shared that, “In town halls, they talk about high school and college and the butterfly effect – whatever you do now will affect you in high school and high school will affect you in college so you need to ensure you put structures in place now and that’s how we operate here.”

- Frequent classroom observations and feedback from administrators based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching contain specific language from the rubric, evidence from the classroom observation that supports the rating, alignment to instructional shifts and the school’s instructional focus, and actionable next steps. These are then addressed in subsequent classroom observations. In addition to formal observations, school leaders perform weekly walkthroughs of classrooms and provide teachers with immediate feedback as well as weekly communications from the principal to staff. All observations and walkthrough data are saved in an online platform, in addition to saving observations in Advance, so that all decisions around teacher training can be data-informed. Leadership and teachers shared that everything around expectations is transparent and visible in a variety of platforms including a handbook, weekly emails and memos and a shared digital platform. As a result, all staff know and understand roles and responsibilities.

- The school has implemented student-led conferences in lieu of traditional parent-teacher conferences. School leaders and staff collaborated in researching, designing, and planning the transition to student-led conferences in an effort to instill a level of ownership in students over their own academic progress. These conferences take place two times during the year and, according to school leaders and staff, are part of the ever-increasing level of high expectations that are communicated to students. Students spoke about using their writing portfolios and working with assigned teachers to prepare to present their progress and goal setting with their parents. As one parent stated, “My child is getting better and telling me where they are and what they need to do. The school now helps build all students’ confidence, and that usually translates to improvement.”
Findings
School leaders support teacher development with effective feedback that accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps from frequent formal and informal, and strategic classroom observation cycles, peer intervisitations and analysis of student data.

Impact
As a result, practices that articulate clear expectations are having a positive impact on teacher capacity and strengthening instruction across the school that is aligned with professional goals for teachers.

Supporting Evidence

- Classroom observation reports included meaningful and actionable feedback to teachers. For example, one observation report includes feedback to ensure that the turn-and-talk strategy is used. Another report detailed having the teacher create rigorous State exam-aligned tasks that include multiple texts to allow students to engage in a cognitive productive struggle. Other examples of actionable feedback found in observation reports asked teachers to group students based on their skill level as well as formative assessment data such as exit tickets to help identify the scaffolds each group might require. One teacher reported that due to a school leader’s feedback, she has been working at not being the “sage on the stage” and ensuring that students do more of the “heavy lifting” during a lesson. As a result, student participation has increased and there is improvement in understanding as evidenced on exit tickets.

- In addition, there are examples of observation reports that reinforce feedback offered in earlier reports. For example, one report includes advice about the use of differentiated do now word problems. A subsequent report indicates that the teacher has begun to implement this strategy successfully. In another report, a teacher is advised to allow students to share out after a turn and talk rather than paraphrasing for them. A later report compliments the teacher for implementing this feedback, allowing the lesson to be more student centered. Teachers also shared that there are weekly visits from colleagues and that their peers’ feedback has been helpful. One teacher shared, “After an intervisitation, I got feedback from a colleague on a behavioral management protocol that I should try out. I implemented it immediately and it made a real difference.” Another teacher shared that she observed a teacher chunking tasks. She debriefed with the teacher afterwards and the teacher helped her break down how to apply this practice in her own classes. The teacher stated, “This really helped my students complete tasks successfully and it was even noted on my next observation report how I had effectually implemented this strategy with my students!”

- Besides the reports resulting from official classroom observations, emails that contain actionable feedback follow unofficial classroom visits. One teacher shared that she was advised about specific strategies to try in her class. A review of the email confirmed that not only was a strategy given, but resources were also shared, including a colleague who could be visited to see this strategy in action. Another teacher shared that a school leader reminded him that student learning outcomes are the “name of the game” and what he should be thinking about during lesson planning, specifically reviewing exit tickets from the day before to ensure student understanding. The teacher reported that he reflected on the advice and has implemented it. This resulted in improved planning as evidenced on his last written observation report. A review of observation reports and mentor notes evidences that teachers meet weekly with their mentors and leadership to discuss progress towards meeting professional goals. Teachers also reported that the verbal feedback they receive after formal and informal observations is aligned to their goals.
**Additional Finding**

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

All teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations both in content areas and at the grade level. Teachers are empowered to positively affect student learning through teacher leadership opportunities.

**Impact**

Collaborations within teams have strengthened teachers’ instructional capacity and established a level of schoolwide instructional coherence and increased student achievement for all learners. Teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions regarding professional development and resource acquisitions that affect student learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers across the school collaborate in professional teams in which they develop and implement schoolwide instructional practices, embedding Common Core and the instructional shifts to continuously promote improved achievement for all learners. In an observed ELA department meeting, teachers analyzed student work using a protocol to identify trends, create groupings, and design scaffolds in ELA Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes. The task for students involved was selecting and analyzing quotes from a text. One teacher shared, “All of my students can give some basic level of analysis, but sometimes an attempt at analysis can just be basically a restatement of a quote from the text.” Another noted, “The explanation of text evidence is very basic in these student examples.” A third questioned, “Do they know that the point of analysis is to explain how the quote connects to the theme?” Teams have an established protocol for sharing and reflecting on student work and assessment data and track progress of their meeting. Their report showed clear next steps for classroom implementation, which included teacher-selected quotes to allow more time for student analysis as well as a mini-lesson comparing basic and insightful analysis.

- Teachers collaboratively plan and refine curriculum throughout the school year in inquiry-based teacher teams that utilize the Data Wise process. As one teacher noted, this shared protocol, “…creates a shared language and gives us one solid way of talking and thinking about the work.” As part of this process, staff analyze student work and performance data to inform their instructional practice in order to move toward improving student outcomes. A trend for eighth-grade students not using text-based evidence was noted; teachers designed a group conference strategy and applied it. Data on a later summative assessment shows a 35 percent increase in students using text-based evidence successfully. Departmental content teams are comprised of content-specific teachers and special education teachers. During team meetings, content teachers examine curriculum to ensure that tasks are rigorous, and the special education teachers ensure both differentiation and supports for all students are aligned to tasks.

- School leaders and instructional lead teachers are able to identify distributed leadership practices and structures that are deeply rooted in the school’s day-to-day operations and articulate how these structures foster a culture in which teacher leaders provide continual input into strategic decisions that affect student achievement. Peer Collaborative Teacher Leaders at the department level, as well as teacher leaders at the grade level are part of the principal’s cabinet and part of major school-based decisions such as the implementation of readers and writers workshop. Teachers cited involvement in designing and facilitating curriculum, mentoring, and teacher ownership of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support Program (PBIS) as key areas in which they have had a voice in major school decisions affecting student learning.