Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Catherine and Count Basie M.S. 72
133-25 Guy R. Brewer Blvd.
Jamaica, New York 11434
Principal: Omotayo Cole Cineus

Date of review: December 3, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Mabel Muñiz - Sarduy
The School Context

Q072 is a middle school with 756 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 72% Black, 11% Hispanic and 12% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 91%.

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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<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>Focus</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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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School Culture

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<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<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>
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Systems for Improvement

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<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>
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Findings
Teachers regularly examine data and student work within inquiry-based teams. Leadership structures provide a means for teachers to have input on key decisions about curricula and teaching practices.

Impact
The work of teacher teams has resulted in improved pedagogy and student progress on assessments. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams review state data and I–Ready data to make instructional decisions, and share ideas to adjust teaching practices per content area and per grade. For example, during a team meeting observed, an 8th grade teacher who was observing a 7th grade colleague pointed out the importance of units within a graph not being the same, the teacher who was presenting the student work had not noticed that the particular student work had units which were incorrect. The teacher stated “it has to be hours”, then the teacher noticed the error. The teacher recorded next steps for that particular student.

- During the observed meeting a teacher lead shared with the team the major standards being tested for the 7th grade; students had a task from Engage NY and a rubric to guide the norming of the task. The teacher lead posed questions to teachers as they reviewed student work. Questions that were posed were; Is the work aligned to the standards, what constitutes a quality piece, what do you see in the student work, what questions should we ask the students and what are the child’s next step? The lead teacher reminded teachers to use the rubric to guide their feedback.

- Teacher leaders, who represent each grade or discipline, meet weekly to discuss professional development and teacher practice.

- Teachers articulated that the structures in place for meeting as well as for curricula modification which is aligned to the standards provides opportunities for teachers to share best practices, understand what is expected and use the same language which supports student thinking.
Findings
Teacher pedagogy are beginning to reflect a set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the instructional shifts.

Impact
Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to curricula. Group teaching demonstrates little evidence of support materials that produce meaningful work products, resulting in missed opportunities for all learners including the school’s subgroups and little ownership on behalf of students.

Supporting Evidence

- Although school leadership and teachers shared the school focus of Questioning & Discussion as well as evidence of critical thinking skills on performance tasks, this focus did not come to life in some classrooms. In one mathematics classroom we visited, a teacher asked questions with regard to “area and table” some examples of questions were, “you start here first”, “that is another way to do it”, “what are we looking for”, “what did they give you” and “what happens when you space it?” These questions were geared to specific students and the discussions were posed in a “teacher to student” fashion.

- In most classrooms visited, although two teachers used Popsicle sticks to have a variation of students participating, students participated in teacher student discussions as teacher-generated questions were shared. In another class, students had a project “cloning transgenes”, questions posed by teachers, as students listened passively, were; “what have you read about, what does it mean, when do we modify something, what is the end product, are we talking about cloning or transgenes and are they the same?” There were missed opportunities to have students discuss how cloning and transgenes relate to a cell and it’s DNA.

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies including questioning were appropriate and routine however they inconsistently provided multi entry points into the curricula leading to uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and uneven demonstration of higher order thinking skills in student work products, including the work of English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWDs). In another class the objective of “I can analyze the development of time in a novel by identifying challenges to and factors in survival for Salva and Nya in, A Long Walk of Water” the teacher guided students in the challenges of the characters in the story, by posing questions like, “how does he do that, what else can we add, he comes across whom, how does that help him, and did he always pay attention, why?” These questions were appropriate however student-to-student engagement was low. Since there were two adults in the classroom there can be two groups using the guided teaching approach in order to reach more students including are English Language Learners (ELLs) and Students with Disabilities (SWD’S).
### 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**

All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and integrate key instructional shifts in tasks, regularly using student work to make curricular refinements. Yet, these tasks do not yet ensure that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

**Impact**

The school’s curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all learners. Academic tasks provided by Engage NY push student thinking across grades and subjects resulting in high levels of student cognitive engagement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Curriculum maps for mathematics show the alignment and integration of CCLS, which include key instructional shifts. The emphasis of fluency, CCLS, major learning objectives, assessments and performance tasks was evident in curriculum maps.

- The unit plan in Literacy, “A Long Walk to Water”, illustrates multiple designs of a three-day task, with scaffolds and entry points for all students. Some examples of scaffolds were; nonlinguistic symbols such as two speech bubbles of two people talking for discussion, a picture of a pen for record symbol, a magnifying glass for details and a light bulb for the main idea this can support or English language learners and Special Education Students. Additional discussion strategies were: number each pair of students, fist to five, anchor charts for talking stems, sentence starters and Think-Pair-Share.

- The school has a system in place where teachers’ create action plans after review of data that outline standards, student data, time frequency of support resources, and evidence of potential barriers for implementation of CCLS curricula. This action plan is reviewed by administration to ensure assess to curriculum for all learners including our English language learners and Special Education students.

- Curriculum maps demonstrate a greater emphasis on content that is aligned to student data as well as frequently tested items based on the New York State exam. For example, students showed a need on ratios. Teachers revised their units and shifted the unit on ratios to the beginning of the year.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Developing

Findings
The school uses assessments in all subject areas that are loosely aligned with the school’s curricula, thus providing limited feedback to students as evidenced by the majority of the classrooms we visited.

Impact
Limited feedback to students at the classroom level reflects the inconsistency of the use of ongoing checks for understanding, student self-reflection and teachers making adjustments to meet all students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leadership shared that there was not a uniform system for checks for understanding however they are trying self – assessment forms, thumbs up or down, Fist to Five, exit tickets and the counting of how many hands are up. These strategies were not evident in the five of the seven classrooms we visited.

- Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self – assessment so that teachers inconsistently make effective on the spot adjustments to meet students’ learning needs. For example in one of the classrooms a student was copying the power point lesson into his notebook in order to keep busy.

- Teachers have assessments that measure common skills to evaluate student progress across classrooms however the use of formative assessments were not evident during classroom visits as many teachers were teaching to the entire class without scaffolds or supports.

- Teachers as a team analyze data and review student work however this practice resulted in a limited use of data. Additionally, the majority of classrooms we visited were teaching whole group lessons. This limited the opportunities for extension of learning as well as supports for our English language learners and Special Education students. The use of questioning and discussion techniques so that all learners are meaningfully engaged in rigorous tasks and high levels of discussions and work products was limited.
Findings
High expectations are consistently messaged to the staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in trainings and other modes of communication. Workshops, newsletters and performance updates keep families apprised of student progress toward college and career readiness.

Impact
Structures that support the school’s high expectations build buy-in and accountability amongst staff, students and their families, providing a clear path towards increased student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- In an effort to communicate high expectations to all constituents, the staff handbook outlines the school’s mission, vision, instructional expectations, grading policy and lesson planning requirements, which reinforces the school-wide expectations for teaching and culture.

- Parents shared that teachers communicate with them on a regular basis about child progress through conferences, the phone system, emails and Pupil Path.

- The school shared the action plans which teachers create based on a focused group of students and leadership holds them accountable for the how and why to support students in the skills needed to prepare them for readiness for college and careers.

- The school provides Saturday academy, Beacon program and a Teacher Incentive grant that provides supports for teachers, students and families in order to communicate high expectations for all. These extra programs provide ongoing guidance to support students toward the next level.