Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Jean Nuzzi Intermediate School
Middle School  Q109
213-10 92 Avenue
Queens
NY 11428

Principal: Karleen Adam Comrie

Date of review: May 1, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Matthew Angell
Jean Nuzzi Intermediate is a middle school with 977 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 40% Black, 19% Hispanic, 5% White, 33% Asian students, and 3% American Indian. The student body includes 8% English language learners and 8% 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 94.4%.

**School Quality Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></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>Proficient</td>
<td></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>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**School Culture**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Systems for Improvement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school…</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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</thead>
<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>Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Area of Celebration

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

**Findings**

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, content standards, and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits across grades and subjects.

**Impact**

Purposeful decisions around curricula coherence and college and career readiness ensure rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills are consistently emphasized across grades and subjects for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school maintains all curricula maps in an online database, Atlas Rubicon. All teachers have access to maps and school leaders regularly give feedback to teachers regarding revisions. A review of unit maps revealed a common template that includes key standards, essential questions, enduring understandings, skills, formative and summative assessments, as well as learning activities that align to the instructional shifts. Teachers identify the Depth of Knowledge level required of students for each activity and assessment.

- Teachers included within their units, and lesson plans, strategies for multiple entry points for students with disabilities and English language learners in their assessments and learning activities to ensure all learners have access to rigorous tasks and demonstrate higher order thinking skills. For instance, in a sixth grade mathematics unit on Geometry teachers included key vocabulary support, scaffolded formative assessments with multiple forms of representation, and targeted learning activities within the unit for struggling learners. Final assessment within the unit included a project assessment as well as a written exam with extended response questions that require students to explain their thinking.

- Unit plans have made purposeful decisions to integrate content from other subjects and expand on opportunities for students write or explain their thinking. For instance, in a seventh grade English language arts unit on slavery teachers combined resources connected to the social studies scope and sequence with the unit resources from Expeditionary learning to extend student’s opportunity to cite evidence from a variety of authentic texts.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings
The majority of teachers engage in structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams analyze assessment data and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

Impact
Teacher team meetings are loosely connected to school goals and are developing an inquiry approach. Analysis of student work and assessment data inconsistently improves teacher practice and does not yet capture progress of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that cluster teams, which are cross functional teams consisting of members from multiple subjects, meet weekly to discuss student work and function as the school inquiry teams. During the team meeting observed, a cluster team had a set agenda to review the progress of two students. Team members shared strategies already attempted to boost the engagement of the selected students which included phone calls home, moving of seating, or assistance organizing materials. Teachers brought student folders with them that contained student work, but it was not used during discussion. A review of previous team agendas and meeting outcomes revealed many outcomes were similarly related to parent outreach and classroom management strategies. Teacher teams do not yet capture the effectiveness of instructional strategies connected to school goals or the school focus on student engagement.

- Teachers stated that they reviewed student assessments and student work to make instructional adjustments. One vertical teacher team looked at item analysis from State exams as well as common assessment data from a recent assessment to discuss possible curriculum adjustments. However, decisions were often limited to the moving of units to different portions of the year and lacked consideration for the performance of different groups of students or the effectiveness of teaching practices which diminishes the effectiveness of the team to measure the impact of initiatives.

- A review of documents from teacher team meetings including agendas and protocols revealed that although the majority of teachers meet in teams they do not yet identify best practices or deeply analyze student progress. Furthermore, documents from teacher team meetings revealed that teachers do not consistently discuss the impact of their team work and progress for groups of students.
Additional Findings

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms student discussion reflected consistent levels of student understanding.

Impact
Across classrooms, teaching strategies aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and result in lessons that promote high levels of student thinking in work products and discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that the students learn best when engaged in high quality discussions and opportunities to demonstrate their thinking. Across classrooms, we observed students working in groups, discussing solutions to problems and using multiple methods of representing their thinking. For instance, in a sixth grade mathematics class, students discussed the relationship between the area formula for quadrilaterals and the surface area and volume formula for rectangular prisms. Groups worked together on complex mathematic problems, with modified supports for some groups, to present their solutions in a gallery walk. Student groups shared their thinking and represented multiple solutions paths to their peers.

- Across classrooms, teachers were observed assigning appropriately rigorous tasks that required students to cite evidence from text or expand upon their thinking through written explanation. For instance, in a sixth grade English language arts class, student groups worked together to capture evidence from their text that demonstrated a character’s challenge and response in order to make inferences about their character. Students were observed challenging each other to cite the page and paragraph where they gathered their evidence to support their inference. Students pushed on each other’s’ thinking and during the share out of inferences, students also gave feedback to their peers.

- During an eighth grade social studies lesson students engaged in group discussion comparing the characterization of Theodore Roosevelt in two different texts. Groups gathered evidence using a graphic organizer and synthesized a cohesive response using evidence from both texts.
Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use assessments with rubrics that are aligned to the school curricula. Common assessments are used to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subjects.

Impact
Teacher and student feedback from rubric based assessments provide actionable feedback regarding student achievement and the results are used to adjust curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of student work posted on bulletin boards, inside and outside of classrooms, as well as in portfolios revealed rubric based feedback with actionable next steps given to students. Students articulated that teachers consistently review rubrics prior to the start of an assignment and were able to articulate their next steps based on teacher feedback. For instance, one student stated that they received mostly positive feedback in writing, but were still struggling with ratios and proportions in math. Each student was able to reference their portfolio to highlight their strengths and areas for growth. On written feedback teachers referenced the rubric with comments such as “focus a little more on building a better, more detailed conclusion that connects with your evidence.”

- The school uses a variety of common assessments across content areas such as pre/post unit assessments, Degree of Reading Power (DRP) running records, performance tasks, and state test simulations to monitor student progress. School leaders create item analysis breakdowns by classrooms for teachers to analyze their assessment results. For instance, the school administers the New York City performance tasks, as measures of student learning, and school leaders generated a breakdown by rubric trait of student performance. Teachers discovered a need within the data to improve writing instruction and integrate some skills within other content areas. For instance, the school identified claim and counterclaim as a focus for students and modified social studies units to provide more opportunities for students to write and receive feedback on those skills.

- The school analyzed the item analysis of prior year’s State examinations and made adjustments to the curricula to improve academic vocabulary, argumentative writing opportunities, and proficiency with expressions and equations. A curriculum team meets regularly to review common assessment data and make adjustments. A review of teacher lessons plans showed teachers adjusting student groups in response to assessment data.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide aligned professional development. School leaders and staff consistently communicated expectations, connected to college and career readiness, to families.

Impact
The systems for accountability result in a clear understanding of high expectations. There is ongoing feedback to students and families to help them understand progress towards those expectations.

Supporting Evidence
- The principal’s high expectations are set forth to the entire staff through explicit written communication, in the form of a staff handbook, as well as structured professional development. School leaders meet with the professional development committee to ensure workshops and supports both connect to school instructional priorities, created from teacher observation data and student data, as well as from feedback from teachers about their needs. The professional development plan highlights the goal each topic aligns too, such as instructional expectations or data analysis. Many of the topics have been connected to curriculum planning and the use of Skedula and Atlas Rubicon to refine curricula and provide timely feedback to students and families.

- All teachers maintain an online grade book, Skedula, accessible to families and students through the application Pupil Path. Teachers are able to make comments on student pages and communicate with families through the application. Parents reported that having the application in addition to teachers calling, emailing, or texting has improved their understanding of how their children are progressing in school. In addition, the school also sends home four progress reports a year that inform families of how their child is doing in the middle of the marking period.

- Parent workshop opportunities focus on Common Core Learning Standards as well as community needs. Parents stated that they appreciated workshops related to Common Core math because it helped them understand the work students were bringing home. One parent recalled a time when her child brought home an assignment home that she tried to help with, but was told she was doing the math wrong. Then she attended the workshop and discovered how math instruction had changed. In response to parent requests, the school has provided workshops on topics such as Bullying and Suicidal Ideation.

- School leaders assign teachers intervisitation based on observation feedback as well as encourage teachers to observe colleagues on their own. When an intervisitation occurs teachers must follow a specific protocol that captures noticing about the teacher, students, instructional strategies, and lesson activities. Teacher’s assigned intervisitation will debrief the observation with an administrator.