Quality Review Report

2014-2015

I.S. X303 Leadership & Community Service
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle X303
1700 MACOMBS ROAD
BRONX
NY 10453

Principal: PATRICIA BENTLEY

Dates of review: March 13, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Dr. Simmons
The School Context

I.S. X303 Leadership & Community Service is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle School with 325 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 23% Black, 76% Hispanic and 0.7% White students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 68% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 93%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school regularly...</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 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>Proficient</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>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
Teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations resulting in shared improvements in teacher practice. The majority of staff profit from varied opportunities to share and develop strengths as individuals, leaders and members of the larger community.

Impact
Teacher teams examine student work and classroom practice and build instructional capacity, resulting in shared improved teacher practice leading students toward mastery of goals. Shared leadership structures build capacity to improve student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet daily individually and collectively. Additionally, teachers meet with grade level leaders who are responsible for facilitating discussions regarding instruction, student work, and revisions to the curricula. During team meetings, student work is analyzed and a discussion of the conditions of learning and strategies implemented in the classroom are highlighted to inform the inquiry process. Further, all teams systemically use a protocol to record the minutes, topic of discussion, action taken, and outcome.

- Teachers build a culture of professional collaboration. Teachers reflect with open-ended questions, such as “What do I plan to take away with me today? What am I going to try in my classroom before the next time we meet?” Teachers come fully prepared to team meetings, with data collected from lessons and exemplars used in literacy, math, and practices and strategies that have determined the conditions for learning.

- Using protocols while looking at student work to identify student needs, teachers learn strategies from their team members and collaborate to brainstorm ideas that would address the targeted student’s needs. For example, one teacher noticed that a student in her inquiry group was having problems in a particular mathematics task. Thanks to strategies suggested by a colleague on the inquiry team, the teacher implemented the strategy and the student is now able to do the task in various forms and has shown mastery in this area. These practices have helped to build a reflective, collaborative community that plans cohesively and shares best practices gained from inquiry team work in math and English language arts across the school to close student learning gaps.

- Teachers are selected as lead teachers, mentors and instructional coaches by the principal. They facilitate professional learning workshops, common planning teams and data analysis for administration and colleagues. Additionally, several teachers, with full support from the principal, have their administrative credentials. Several teachers have written concept papers and as a result have opened up their own school based on MS 303’s model and structure.

- The review of Grade 6 English Language Arts (ELA) teacher team artifacts shows the team uses an inquiry approach. In October and November, the teacher team focused on appositives. Teachers taught explicitly and followed up with daily Right on Write on (RONO) targeted practice games for 5-7 minutes each day. Teachers noticed that students on quizzes did still not understand. Next step, with the support from Lead Teacher Baruch Inquiry, the teachers broke down the appositives skill into 7 different sub-skills and created an assessment to see which skills students struggled with. Teachers used this data to refine instruction and then assessed students. The teacher team noticed that 4 students in each class still struggled with appositives. The teacher team decided to host a lunch and learn for several weeks with the struggling group. As a result, students showed significant improvement on their quiz.
Area of Focus

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

Findings
Classroom instruction provides consistent opportunities for meaningful student engagement in lessons that motivate students to reach their highest potential and teaching strategies are consistent across the school.

Impact
Across classrooms, curricula extensions support students to produce meaningful work products, yet there are some missed opportunities for all learners to take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal visits teachers and observes on the delivery of content and engagement to monitor teacher practice. The Integrated Collaborative Teaching (ICT) model is adopted across all classrooms. Teacher practices reflect the belief that all children can learn by creating independent learners and problem solvers. As such, teachers use differentiated activities and resources for flexible groups.

- In an ELA classroom, grade 8 students participated in a presentation based on differentiated articles that they read. Students analyze the purpose of information and evaluate the motives behind its presentation. In a review of student work, it revealed the work in argumentative writing stating a claim and in text.

- Teachers use opportunities for choice to create a variety of ways for students to access the content and task. For example, in a grade 6 math class, students look for a strategy for finding surface area of a rectangular prism and to explain why the strategy works. Students challenge themselves to determine the amount of wrapping paper needed to cover the entire gift box.

- Teachers meet regularly, including during their lunch hour to discuss student progress, plan and share strategies to increase student growth and achievement. Children are grouped according to specific needs identified by data and provided multiple entry points and differentiated instruction. Differentiation of tasks for sub groups including higher achieving and lower achieving students and English language learners was also observed in classes.
Additional Findings

Quality Indicator: 3.4 High Expectations  Rating: Well Developed

Findings
High expectations are consistently messaged to staff via the use of the Danielson Framework for Teaching in trainings and other modes of communication. Workshops update keep families apprised of student progress towards 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 direction towards elevated student achievement and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders have created high levels of expectations for all staff which is evidenced throughout the community via workshops, staff handbook, website, peer-visitations, progress reports, orientations that emulate a culture where accountability is reciprocal between all stakeholders. Frequent cycles of observations hold staff accountable for meeting expectations for pedagogical practice.

- During interviews, staff and parents expressed that they strive for the best in all that they do and are appreciative to have stability with the staff and administrative team. The principal has been at the school for over a decade. Parent workshops provide information regarding the importance of exam expectations, the Common Core Learning Standards and high school and college preparation.

- College and career readiness projects are given to all students. For example, Grade 7 students must complete a summer high school exploration project. Students are tasked to list 15 high schools that may be interested in, to visit Inside Schools online to research the high schools, attend an information session. Students also must know how to get to the desired high school from their houses.

- The school has an open door policy. Caring and respect is modeled by everyone. The reviewer was greeted by a student who escorted and shared highlights of the school. All students wear uniforms and in the first few moments of class teachers ask students to look around and pick up any refuge from their learning community. Based on the interview, the principal inherently believes in a nurturing community of learners who are devoted to self-development, the value of achievement and the willingness to do one’s best. The collaboration among parents, students and staff will foster high expectations, academic rigor and critical thinking, thereby, enriching the learning experience of each student. The Student Council meets regularly and shares ideas and suggestions relative to school activities.

- Students participate in a Tri-Weekly Video News Show. Students present news worthy topics and conduct interviews. For example, in the “Illuminating Alumni” discussion, students’ interview previous students who are in high school and/or college.
Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment  
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
School leaders and faculty systematically collect and analyze a wide range of data that successfully identifies the needs of students and adjusts instruction in order to improve student progress and performance.

Impact
The school's systems to consistently monitor progress through data analysis, as well as, during instruction are used regularly to guide adjustments in units and lessons to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers collectively create and/or use assessments and design rubrics that are aligned to the curricula. Feedback is used as assessment and is tri-fold (teachers, peer and self). Teachers use all assessments, as a picture of student needs to track progress and modify instruction. Additionally, the school has a comprehensive grading policy that includes summaries from each subject class, afterschool and advisory. Details of homework assignments, classwork, projects, participation and effort, organization and preparedness, tests and quizzes are given to support students. During the interview, students shared that their grades have improved due to the succinct feedback from teachers.

- In English language Arts, the school assesses through a variety of assessments aligned with state ELA & NYSELAT, as well as, teacher created rubrics, bulletin boards, conferencing, checklists and portfolios. Based on interviews, at the teacher team meeting, the school uses various methods of feedback, such as data tracker spreadsheets, teacher data meetings, observation feedback (formal and informal), walkthrough feedback, and tri-fold feedback.

- Teams meet with the principal to share agendas and next steps, providing the principal with data on their students, as well as data on teacher instructional progress. This work has been instrumental resulting in English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities demonstrating meeting their targets and closing the achievement gap on the latest School Quality Guide.

- Teachers shared, during the meeting, that they create learning goals and benchmark performances for tasks before using formative assessments to measure student proficiency of the goals. Based on the 2014-2015 Mid-Year Data Analysis for reading and using Fountas and Pinnell, students have made .6 years of growth since September in grade 6, .8 years in grade 7 and .5 in grade 8.

- During the visit, the teacher teams’ work comprised of analyzing on-demand writing pieces for low, medium and high performing students using a mentor text, a rubric and the appropriate Common Core Learning Standard as well as the sharing of strategies regarding how high achieving students can be supported to accelerate their writing.
Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum  Rating: Proficient

Findings
All curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards. Higher-order skills are emphasized in academic tasks and embedded coherently across grades and subjects for all learners.

Impact
The principal and staff have developed engaging rigorous curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards with the instructional shifts offering meaningful learning experiences to improve student achievement for all students.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders and teachers articulate how they ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and other content area standards and chosen strategies for integrating the instructional shifts coherently across grades and subjects evidenced during the principal interview and teacher team meeting. Teacher teams use a variety of data, summative and formative to continuously analyze student work to plan and challenge students’ thinking for all students. A variety of academic tasks, with multiple entry points are provided to allow students to work in small groups and show various ways to solve a problem.

- Based on the school’s reading data, students struggle with vocabulary and comprehension. The school used this information to incorporate guided reading with fidelity and ensure that students are reading books at their appropriate level. This systemic approach is seen in advisory as well. The school incorporated reading response journals to support the Sustained Silent Reading Program to monitor student comprehension, track growth in the quality of student responses and maintain a line of communication between advisees and advisors about literature.

- Rigorous habits, such as class discussion and on-demand writing, are incorporated into every lesson and are the outgrowth of the end of module performance-based tasks. Students create their own meaning, integrate skills into processes, and use what they have learned to solve real world problems. For example, grade 6 students choose complex texts such as excerpts from Health and Science news article, excerpts of “President Obama’s speech on education to Wakefield high school” and a news article, “Do violent video games play a role in shooting?” with the Lexile measure of 1270L. Scaffolded leveled text such as “The myth of Michael Jordan” is also used to construct strong arguments that include counter-claims and text-based evidence.

- The school incorporated Judith Hochman’s Writing model. On average, students have made 1 year’s growth since September. The ELL students have made an average of 0.6 years growth and IEP students averaged 0.7 years that surpassed last year’s midline writing growth of 0.8 years. As such, the teacher teams are revising the curriculum to reinforce writing tasks across the subject areas.

- Curriculum maps are consistently revised with specific guidelines for English language learners and students with disabilities. These maps include: enduring understandings, time frames of six weeks, targeting standards with specific outcomes and skills, key concepts and content, assessment products, materials, resources, and instructional adjustments.