Quality Review Report

2016-2017

M.S. 061 Dr. Gladstone H. Atwell
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 17K061
400 Empire Blvd.
Brooklyn
NY 11225

Principal: Dewana Daid

Dates of Review:
March 21, 2017 - March 22, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier
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

M.S. 061 Dr. Gladstone H. Atwell serves students in grade six through grade eight. 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

### Instructional Core

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</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 Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<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>Proficient</td>
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<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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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<thead>
<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>Proficient</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>
</tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<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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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates a unified set of high expectations.

Impact

Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness. Supports ensure that students take ownership of their progress in each unit of study in each class and are prepared for high school level classwork and their corresponding New York State (NYS) Regents exams.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff members use tools such as internet platforms, emails, text messages, phone calls, and grade-based weekly newsletters to communicate high expectations to all students and families. Progress reports are distributed to all students and their families in the time between official report cards. Progress reports contain information as to each students’ recent progress, present status, recommendations for growth, as well as individualized hand-written comments from each child’s teacher that families can use to help support their children. Specifically, one parent spoke about the ease she had with helping her daughter make-up some missed homework assignments due to their being posted on the internet. Another parent spoke about how she has been able to monitor her son’s reading and push him to reach specific goals because of the online reading program used at the school for which parents received access and training.

- Students all benefit from a curriculum designed to prepare them for high school expectations. All students who complete their grade eight coursework are eligible to take Regents exams in Algebra, Earth Science, English Language Arts (ELA), Global History, Living Environment, and United States History and Government. Analysis of 2015-2016 NYS Regents exam data reveals that students took all five of the available exams and a minimum of ten present of grade eight students passed each of them. The Regents exam in U.S. History and Government had the highest student pass rate with 22 percent of student earning a grade of 65 or above. Additionally, 14 percent of students earned a score of 85 or above on that same exam. Students spoke about the resources available to them that help them succeed. For example, one student spoke about always going to after-school for help on homework while other students about using the school’s other options for extra help that occur during the day and on Saturdays.

- Across grades and subjects, students take ownership of their learning through self-analysis of pre-unit assessment results. From this analysis, students plot their pre-assessment data on graphs and based on that data subsequently create goals for each unit of study. Students then chart their progress toward those unit-based using the unit post-assessment data. One student reported, and all present agreed, “We use different colors to chart where we are on the pre- and post-tests. Blue means we mastered that standard. Green means that we passed. We use red when we have a weakness in that standard.” Evidence of this practice was evident in each class as the graphic organizers on which students’ record and chart their assessment results as well as their detailed goals are posted.
Findings

School leaders support teachers’ development with feedback and next steps from infrequent cycles of classroom observation. Feedback to teachers captures strengths, challenges, and next steps but is not yet fully connected to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact

School leaders implemented a break in conducting classroom observations in order to engage in professional development (PD) and peer-assessment on classroom observation report writing best-practices. While feedback to teachers is beginning to support teacher development, it sometimes only summarizes conversations held during post-observation conferences without offering actionable next-steps.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders have engaged in norming exercises in the use of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. School leaders have also purposely redesigned their responsibilities so that specific content area teachers are under the prevue of specific school leaders whereas prior to this restructuring, availability of school leaders’ schedules drove decisions as to which teachers would be observed by specific leaders. Although a majority of teachers have had their observation cycles re-launched, one teacher of the nine for whom observation reports were submitted, was most recently observed in October 2016. As over five months have passed since this last observation and the present, the possible positive impact on this teacher’s practice that the observation process can have is limited.

- Classroom observation feedback is developing so that it can support teacher growth. A grade six teacher feedback suggested planning every lesson to begin with a modeling component. This teacher was also advised to watch two specific online instructional videos on the topics of modeling and facilitating a turn and talk. Another observation report evidenced feedback to a teacher on the importance of assessing student work during class and to complement this effort with a recording tool so that the results can effectively inform on-the-spot instructional adjustments and future planning. A school leader advised a teacher to group students not only using the available data for the class in general, but to also use data from class-based assessments and group students based on the specific skills to be covered in a given lesson. Each of the observation reports discussed here include a follow-up date on which the school leader would return to observe this class and measure the teacher’s application of suggested strategies.

- While observations are beginning to include actionable feedback, there are a variety of observation reports that contain either no feedback or feedback that is general, lacking actionable next-steps that teachers could use in their growth. For example, one observation report indicated that a teacher earned the rating of *Highly developed* in six domains of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and *Effective* in two domains, including engaging students in learning and growing and developing professionally. However, the school leader did not include any next steps that the teacher could use to improve practice. An observation report of a math class included a statement that summarized the topics discussed during the post observation conference, without offering next-steps or identifying supports that could assist the teacher. In another observation report, a teacher earned the rating of *effective* in six domains. However, the feedback offered was neither actionable not connected to any of the rated domains. This feedback stated, “While students are working, that would be a good opportunity for you to work with students on a one on one with their areas of growth and assign supplemental work plan for them to work on those strategies throughout the new unit.”
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts.

Impact
Integration of academic vocabulary, the citation of evidence and math fluency help promote individual and groups of students’ college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Analysis of curricula documents reveals employment of instructional shifts intended to increase students’ facility in math. The shift that requires real world application of math is integrated into a grade eight lesson plan in that students are to use math to determine the best car dealership to work for given varying rates of salary and commissions. In a grade six math lesson plan, students must decide if they have enough money to cover the cost of carpeting rooms of varying areas. A grade eight math unit on systems of linear equations and inequalities, students are to build their fluency in identifying linear equations that have one solution, no solution, or infinite solutions. This instructional shift is integrated with the shift that requires students to solve problems from different perspectives as students are to also answer linear equations algebraically and graphically. This unit includes goals specific to increasing students’ fluency related to knowing when and how to use the distributive property as well as add, subtract, multiply, and divide rational numbers. A grade six math teacher includes a “Math Minute Challenge” activity at the start of every lesson plan in order to build students’ fluency.

- All curricula documents, including for math, science, and social studies, include targeted vocabulary in support of the ELA instructional shift intended to increase students’ vocabulary. In addition to this, multiple curricula documents reveal activities requiring that students cite textual evidence in their writing, as well as read from a balance of fiction and non-fiction texts. In a grade six ELA lesson plan, students were to annotate a text on the increasing use of text-messaging and its effects on relationships and to cite evidence to support their argument as to whether texting helps or hurts people’s ability to communicate. In a grade seven ELA lesson plan, students were to analyze the Rudyard Kipling poem “If,” annotating it with a focus on finding evidence that will support students’ arguments as to the poet’s message. This lesson plan also indicates that each student group includes roles for students, one of which is titled “Vocabulary Enricher.” A science lesson plan detailed a research project in which students are to read about an invasive species and report on that species’ effects on an ecosystem, citing evidence from the texts in support of their arguments.

- Review of curricula documents and academic tasks reveals that student work and data are used in planning and refinement so that all groups of students have access. All unit plans evidence the results of teachers’ regular adjustment of goals, tasks, and differentiation supports. A code of font colors is utilized so that all adjustments are labeled and the target student group for which the adjustment was made is transparent. Purple indicates a pacing revision. Blue signals an addition of content. Adjustments in green reveal work around increasing access for students with disabilities, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students in the lowest third. Changes in red signal that those adjustments were made with the goal of embedding extensions of learning for higher performing students. Unit plans that span all grades and content areas were also accompanied by the data and student work that drove the adjustments that had been made.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across classrooms, teaching strategies consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

The belief that students learn best when they are engaged in challenging lessons and are accountable for their learning is evident across classrooms. Additionally, the design and delivery of instruction to include multiple entry points results in student groups and appropriately leveled work for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade eight ELA class, all students were engaged in analyzing a variety of fiction and non-fiction works. Student engagement was supported by use of a graphic organizer on which student groups were to record their responses to the prompts at each of the four stations to which they would circulate during this lesson. Additionally, all students were to rate their ability to stay on-task and focus during the lesson, as well as narratively discuss which skills were fully grasped and on which skills students believed they needed further support. During a grade eight social studies lesson, student groups were giving presentations on Ellis Island and Angel Island. After each presentation, students throughout the room asked questions of the presenters. The exit slip asked students to discuss what they learned, ask questions they had about the lesson, identify strategies learning during the lesson that they would apply to their lives, and to share any changes they would make to the lesson that would make it more engaging. In a grade seven math class, students were engaged in learning about solving equations that included variables on both sides. Students in all three leveled groups received work with leveled tasks. Additionally, the work in which they were engaged was designed, as one student reported while pointing to the board on which student self-assessments and goals were posted, “based on what we know we need.”

- During a grade six ELA lesson, students were engaged in conversation with their peers around the different benefits that come with annotating texts. One pair discussed how annotating helps develop people’s understanding of the text and by focusing students’ on important points. Another pair of students discussed how annotating helps students identify the facts and questions that lead to stronger inferences than if a student was to simply guess, without having taken notes and underlined strong passages. In a grade eight math class, students talked with partners over the different variables that would help determine which car dealership would be better to work for as well as different real world situations in which the equation on which the lesson focused could be applied. In addition to the accountability evident in student discussion was the presence, in all classrooms, of student-written goals for the current unit of study.

- During a grade eight ELA class, student groups were engaged in leveled work at different stations throughout the room. The lesson was designed to focus students on deepening their understanding of literature while engaging in the three skills identified as challenges from recent assessment data. In a grade seven ELA class, students were also engaged in station learning. In this class, students were groups based on data and were tasked with work designed to challenge students at their level. Students at three separate groups directed my attention to the anchor charts posted in the room when asked about supports that were available to them. In a grade six math class, students were learning about the areas of parallelograms, rhombuses, triangles, and trapezoids. Student groups were designed based on data from the previous unit and groups were engaged in leveled work. Supports were available for the middle and lowest achieving students groups that detailed the different formulas for finding the area of different shapes.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics, checklists, and hand signals aligned with the school’s curricula to inform feedback to students. School leaders use common assessments to determine student progress toward goals.

Impact
Students utilize teachers’ actionable feedback and use assessment tools in order to increase their achievement. All units of instruction are launched by a pre-test resulting in data that is used by teachers to adjust instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work showed teacher-written actionable feedback that students are using for improvement. For example, feedback to grade six students advises them to use more examples from the text to support their arguments, analyze the text evidence that they provide as opposed to just naming it, as well as use words from the question within their answer in order to solidify the connection between their response and the question itself. Feedback in a grade six math class challenges students to solve algebraic equations with fractions and decimals, express the process of answering a question in narrative form, and to be sure to show all the steps taken to arrive at the answer. Students spoke about the value of teachers’ feedback and how they use it to improve their work. One student reported that her teacher gave her feedback about adding quotes or statements to essays for the purpose of “hooking” a reader’s interest. This student added that she now always considers the audience to which she is writing and attempts to appeal to their interest.

- Across classrooms, rubrics and checklists are used as tools of support for student growth. Rubrics that are aligned with the curricula, along with rubrics and checklists that have been modified for student use and those that have been created for use during a specific unit or lesson, are used across grades and content areas. Evidence of students’ use of these tools is posted on classroom walls, on hallway bulletin boards, and reported by the students themselves. A student reported, and all present agreed, “All our teachers use rubrics and have us use the rubrics on our own work and our partners’ work too.”

- All units are launched with a common pre-test. The results of these pre-tests are tracked and shared with students, resulting in student-written goals. The results of these assessments are then used to adjust instruction prior to the launch of those units. Additionally, data from these assessments is used to plan for the different modifications to instruction to meet the needs made clear by the pre-assessment data. At the close of every unit, post-assessment data is used by teachers to make adjustments to the unit just completed as well as to the next unit in the pacing calendar, to reflect either continued focus on a skill and/or content topic for which students need further development.
### Additional Finding

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

Teacher teams are beginning the work of analyzing assessment data and student work for students they share or are focused on. Distributed leadership structures are developing.

**Impact**

Whereas all teacher teams analyze student assessment data and work, the use of an inquiry approach is being developed within the math team. While teachers serve as mentors and assist each other in pedagogical growth, formation of an instructional leadership team that will include teachers is being developed.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured teams that analyze assessment data and student work in the course of their common planning. They make adjustments to unit and lesson plans in such a way that makes transparent the changes they are making. These teams do not, however, identify a target group of students based on analysis of assessment data or strategically implement strategies to meet those students’ needs.

- The principal has launched an inquiry cycle with the math teacher team. This team met to review the pre-tests for unit three, specifically searching for data on students’ progress on three standards. Analysis of this assessment data revealed that despite teachers’ re-teaching the target standards previous to this unit pre-test, students were still struggling. Subsequent conversation at math teacher team sessions reviewed methods for supporting students with skills such as identifying unknown variables, revisiting specific academic vocabulary, and identifying dependent and independent variables. This inquiry cycle has not yet resulted in assessment data that would show target students’ growth toward specific goals.

- Although teachers serve as mentors and drive intervisitations and their subsequent share-out sessions, there are currently no structures in place through which teachers in general, or teachers with teacher leadership roles, have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning. It was reported, by both school leadership and teachers, that an instructional leadership team was being developed that would be in place by June 2017. This team would include teacher members and will tackle questions of instructional foci and curriculum planning, and make decisions that will affect the school’s overall instructional program.