Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 136 Charles O. Dewey
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 15K136
4004 4th Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11232

Principal: Eric Sackler

Dates of Review:
February 2, 2017 - February 3, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Thomas McKenna
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


School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.1</strong> 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><strong>1.2</strong> 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><strong>2.2</strong> 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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

High expectations, connected to a path towards college and career readiness, are communicated to the entire staff regularly. In addition, teacher teams and staff use the seven habits from the Leader in Me program to communicate a unified set of high expectations for all students and to provide feedback and advisement to students.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability around high expectations for staff. There is a culture for learning in which students have a high degree of ownership over their education and goals.

Supporting Evidence

- In support of the Leader in Me program, all students carry their leadership binder at all times. The binders contain a personal mission statement related to personal and school goals, and current and exemplar work, preparing students for next steps in their learning. As evidence of ownership, students interviewed spoke about their binder audit checklist. The checklist contains eighteen student-created and managed items for review including math, English Language Arts (ELA), science, and social studies-specific academic goals, as well as evidence of strategic and clear planning to reach those goals. A teacher described the tool as a way “students track writing assignments, set goals related to standards, use designated class time for reflection writing on assignments in notebook, relate their work to departmental WIGs (wildly important goals), track their own iReady progress, collect data from baseline data sheet, and perform self-assessments of progress using/citing their own work.”

- The seven habits of the Leader in Me (be proactive, begin with the end in mind, think win-win, seek first to understand, then to be understood, synergize, and sharpen the saw) are verbally and visually communicated continually as a tool for conveying high expectations for both adults and students in the school. Displays in hallways and classrooms, daily announcements, as well as awards ceremonies rooted in the framework are a continual reminder of the schoolwide expectations for professionalism, rigorous instruction, and clear collaboration and communication. Staff is provided with continual professional development related to the program, and teacher teams own areas of the program to further embed into school culture. Most staff interviewed can speak to the connection between the Danielson Framework for Teaching and Covey’s seven habits.

- Teachers and staff systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations through the Lighthouse Action Teams. Every school member is on an action team as a method for meeting all needs of the school through a shared framework and language, connecting adults and students. With the framework and language rooted in the seven habits, action teams address a range of school concerns, including school environment and curriculum.
Across classrooms, teacher practice reflects the regular use of assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned to the curricula. Common assessments across grades and subject areas are an embedded part of school practice.

**Impact**

Assessment practices allow teachers to provide actionable feedback to students clearly informing them of their next learning steps while enabling teachers to adjust instruction and to track student progress. However, the level of feedback given to students varied across classrooms and assignments and did not always offer students a clear portrait of mastery.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Grade six teachers reported a high percentage of students who struggle in certain areas of the New York State ELA exam. They identified a cut-off score of 50 percent or lower when analyzing responses to focus on as a department, and found citing evidence to be the largest gap area for students. Using this ELA exam as a common assessment for determining student progress, the team determined focus areas for instruction for 2016-2017 school year.

- The school's math department designed a schoolwide diagnostic incorporating the school's vision for math, classroom and iReady data, and data from state assessments to identify challenge areas for instruction. These identified areas included measurement, place value, and order of operations. The diagnostic is given in September, February, and June and the results from both September and February have allowed teachers to track student progress and adjust curriculum. One math teacher noted, “The diagnostic lets us know if we move on with the curriculum or if we spiral back and adjust.”

- When asked to describe a piece of work they were proud of, students in the instructional core meeting displayed rubrics and checklists from their leadership notebooks. Each student was able to speak to how they use rubrics to assess their work, and often the work of their peers, before completing a task. Students all stated that they regularly assess their own learning and that teachers not only ask them to review their own work, but also to set goals based on teacher, peer, and self-assessment feedback. Teacher feedback on student work is rooted in a grow and low template, with varying degrees of depth across classrooms. While most feedback provides clear and actionable next steps for students, such as “Revisit the chapter and add two more supporting details to your paper that will improve your argument,” some examples of feedback were more limited and only contained short phrases like “Evidence not cited correctly.”
Findings

All curricula aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and promote college and career readiness skills across subjects. Curricula emphasize higher-order thinking through the use of scenario-based problems in all content areas and grades.

Impact

Curricula decisions and alignment to the instructional shifts ensure coherence and rigorous habits for all learners across grades and content areas. Academic tasks consistently emphasize higher-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- All lesson and unit plans demonstrate an integration of instructional shifts such as writing from sources and integrating academic vocabulary. For example, across several grade six lesson plans in different content areas, the alignment to the standard regarding citing evidence to support analysis is clearly integrated into each plan. By aligning all grade level lessons to this literacy-based standard, this demonstrates a level of instructional coherence. This alignment supports student learning both in a class lesson on analyzing an author's purpose in an article about fracking in a science class and in an ELA class analyzing an author's purpose in a literary text or poem.

- Essential questions and tasks across classrooms reflect alignment with higher levels of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK), asking students to go beyond recall skills to engage in strategic and extended thinking. In a grade seven English as a New Language (ENL) lesson plan, the essential question is, “In analyzing these two authors' arguments, what specific claims and textual evidence make the stronger argument?” In a grade seven math lesson plan, the student facing question is, “How does the area of a circle increase as the circle’s radius and diameter increase?” One of the objectives for that lesson states, “I can use math vocabulary to make a claim, supported by evidence, with justification.”

- Using analysis of student work and data, teachers plan and refine curricula and tasks to engage all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, in learning. Due to the high percentage of ELLs in the school, lessons across all subject areas and grades included both content objectives and clear language objectives, such as to verbally collaborate with a partner and restate parts of the lesson in a student’s own words. In addition, many plans included anticipated confusing vocabulary words. Teachers were also able to produce clear written modifications for lessons for both ELLs and students with disabilities. Modifications included individualized vocabulary graphic organizers to support vocabulary development with a particular focus on words from the next tier, conversation bricks to support academic conversations, and pre-planned groupings of students.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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 and reflect an articulated set of beliefs, including a focus on student discussions, real-world connections, and a modified version of the workshop model. The majority of work products, including products highlighted in student leadership notebooks, reflect intellectually demanding tasks.

Impact

Teachers demonstrate a unified sense of how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts, resulting in high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers state that a core instructional belief of the school is small group instruction with embedded student discussion to support both content-related learning and language development. Across classrooms, teachers use small group instruction to meet students where they are instructionally. In classroom observations, each class visited incorporated small groups, learning stations, and extended opportunities for student discussion. These discussions were at both the small group and table levels, as well as at an in-depth level with paired discussion opportunities.

- In a grade six math class on perimeter and area, students were engaged in problems related to geometry in the context of apartment design. While one group was in direct instruction, another group was working with graph paper designing their own apartment space and applying the lessons of area and perimeter. The students in that station elected to share designs mid-way through the allotted time and actively engaged in offering feedback to each other, independent of the teacher. Two students in that group revised components of their design based on the group interaction. Another group of students on computers were taking specifications for an apartment that had been done by another student, and attempting to use the computer program to design an apartment to those specifications in the role of an architect. One student at the architect station noted, “It feels good to work through the steps of this, from learning the basics to being able to apply those ideas to make an apartment that I would want to live in.” Students at all stations were able to speak to the real-world application of the math content and displayed high levels of engagement.

- Through partner turn and talk, small group and whole class discussions, students in several classrooms expressed their thinking and presented evidence for their positions. In a living environment class, students creating Punnett squares to determine the genotype of a given individual were asked to engage in peer-to-peer questioning in justifying their answers. In a grade seven ELA ENL class, students used a peer editing checklist to assesses each other’s progress in the assignment which asked students to make a claim, provide evidence, and justify their answer.
Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based and structured professional collaborations that strengthen teacher instructional capacity. Leadership structures are embedded across the school.

Impact

Teacher team structures have resulted in instructional coherence and practices that positively impact student achievement. Through department, grade, and action team structures, there is an active focus on teacher leadership and teachers play an integral role in key school decisions.

Supporting Evidence

- During a schoolwide math department meeting staff members focused on looking at student ratio and proportion work across grades with the goal of identifying implications for instruction and vertical alignment. The meeting was modeled on schoolwide classroom instructional practices with staff members solving ratio and proportion problems at each grade level, engaging in turn and talk with a table partner to explore why certain grades would use certain problems, and sharing out with the whole group. Responses were charted for the group and teachers self-assessed their own instructional challenges related to the work and were paired to support the instructional capacity of each other. As a teacher reported, “Vertical alignment is a major focus of our team this year.” Another added, “I want to be successful with my eighth graders next year, which means I need to be clear on what happens in grade seven. From last year to this it has made a big difference.”

- Each department in the school has a department leader. Leaders serve as a point person for administration, collaborate on professional development, and often lead team meetings. In addition to department teams, all action teams related to the Leader in Me program have teacher leaders. These teams can focus on specific areas such as curriculum design, the implementation and support of the leadership binder initiative, high school and college preparation, and school culture and spirit. The high number of teams throughout the school offer multiple opportunities for teacher leadership. For example, members of the leadership binder initiative team designed and rolled out the format and expectations for leadership binders for all students. All students compile binders with class goals, personal growth goals, classwork artifacts, and personal reflection according to the design of the teacher led team. This design and implementation led to a schoolwide push, encouraged by teacher leaders, towards student-led conferences with parents, utilizing the binder as the grounding document in those conferences.

- In a department meeting, a teacher voluntarily presented a video of herself using manipulatives with her ELL class as an example of providing additional entry points for students. The teachers explained that team members film themselves teaching and then share for feedback and debriefing with team members as a form of virtual intervisitation. This practice, which teachers reported as common, allows teachers to support each other in both sharing promising practices and in providing actionable and meaningful feedback to peers to build instructional capacity. Math teachers reported that in a similar process of sharing and analyzing practice, they had developed their department-wide rubric and protocol for student self-assessment.
## Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

The principal, assistant principals, and teacher leaders support the development of all teachers with effective feedback through the strategic use of frequent cycles of informal and formal observations, checklist-based walkthroughs, and the analysis of student work. Feedback accurately captures strengths, challenges, and next steps.

### Impact

Observation feedback clearly articulates expectations for teacher practice and supports teacher development in alignment with each teacher’s professional goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of teacher Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) evaluator forms used during cycles of observation highlight a focus on a clear component and rationale which all provide thoughtful evidence supporting the score and which often contain transcripts of classroom dialogue and teacher questioning in detail. The evaluator notes include commendable aspects, strengths of lesson planning, and references to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. All observations contain clear next steps and a path for improvement for teachers. For example, an evaluator form for a grade seven math teacher commends the integration of the school’s Cite-Evidence-Analysis (CEA) strategy, which originated in ELA classes, into the lesson as a way to “challenge student thinking and make that thinking visible” in a way that supports coherence across grades and subject areas. A grade seven ELA ENL observation recognized the lesson’s incorporation of recent developments and research in content-related pedagogy that also connected to that teacher’s professional learning goals.

- All school leaders also use a common checklist in their walk through of classrooms to assess how well lessons meet schoolwide criteria goals, such as opportunities to incorporate higher-order thinking components in each lesson. The checklist reminds leaders to monitor and record how often students “use their knowledge to form opinions, make decisions, or create authentic products or performances,” “question their thinking,” and “question others’ thinking.” Collectively, leaders engage teachers weekly in strategic thinking and planning about curricular and instructional adjustments based on findings from the checklist review.

- Teachers engage in regular self-assessment of their practice through the support and facilitation of both teacher leaders and school administrators. As evidenced by the school’s 2016-2017 teacher self-assessment inventory, school leaders are able to engage in teacher support and goal setting based on the Danielson Framework for Teaching using student data, teacher observation reports, and teacher self-evaluation data to tailor professional goals and plans to both the needs of the teacher and the needs of the students. Several teachers noted an area for continued growth as better differentiation and scaffolding and expect to use observation feedback from assistant principals and self-assessments to monitor progress.