Quality Review Report

2016-2017

J.H.S. 220 John J. Pershing
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 20K220
4812 9th Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11220

Principal: Loretta Witek

Dates of Review:
February 16, 2017 - February 17, 2017

Lead Reviewer: AJ Hepworth
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>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<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>Proficient</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# School Quality Ratings continued

## School Culture

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

## Systems for Improvement

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

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

The school has an approach to culture-building and social emotional learning with structures in place that also align professional development, family outreach, and student learning experiences.

Impact

A safe environment and inclusive culture conducive to student and adult learning exists which provides appropriate support for students learning needs and the promotion of academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- All school community members, including school leadership, teachers, support staff, parents, and students, contribute to the establishment of an intellectual risk-free environment as a common practice. Teachers shared they “feel at home here on a collegial level, and we are inclusive.” Students and parents alike, agreed they are fully treated with respect and appreciate how their diverse population contributes to unique opportunities often not experienced outside of school, such as trying snacks from their peers from various cultures and hanging out off campus with students from different ethnicities. In addition, a safety committee meets regularly with members of the staff, including the dean, kitchen staff, custodians, and teachers. Discussions and next steps are planned if there is a safety issue.

- A recent initiative was to have counselors visit each class and speak about decision making and the impact of drugs and alcohol. Each grade level assistant principal, guidance counselor, and dean loops with their respective grade to further students’ opportunities to have a forum for knowing an adult with whom they can reach out to and express concerns should they need. Student voice contributed to the purchase of air-conditioning units on the upper floors to help support conducive learning environments.

- Curricular initiatives are in place to support social-emotional learning of students by staff and community members. Guidance counselors created a slideshow presentation to explain how they are working with teachers to prepare students for success. They presented the slideshow in every class over a month-and-a-half. Mental health experts have visited physical education classes to address bullying, self-respect, and self-esteem related issues. Police from the local precinct have visited to speak with the students and play basketball. Girls Empowerment Movement (G.E.M.) is offered to girls to help promote self-awareness and leadership skills through activities and discussions. G.E.M. also helps girls learn how to choose a high school, college, and apply for scholarships.

- There is a focus on a student-centered learning environment so teachers lead classroom instruction less and serve as facilitators. Teachers implement a Hunter College workshop program to help students own their learning experiences when completing tasks and to minimize teacher dominance. Both teachers and parents promote positive academic behaviors to encourage learning.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |

Findings

Classroom practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula with student work products and discussions reflecting uneven levels of student thinking.

Impact

Student work products and discussions reflect uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and little demonstration of higher-order thinking skills.

Supporting Evidence

- A variety of techniques was used during instruction which attempted to engage students in appropriate tasks that would demonstrate their understanding. For example, in a math mini-lesson, students were assigned to one of seven groups, where two groups (those with the lowest achievers based on previously established criteria) would have additional attention from the teacher to help them remain on task and to complete the experiment successfully. Although the task of using candy for graphing exponential functions was engaging for the students, it was not clear how the experimental conditions were differentiated for either the highest or lowest achievers. However, in an English Language Arts (ELA) class for English Language Learner’s (ELLs), students were grouped purposefully based on previous assessments and provided with sentence starters, accountable talk prompts, and bilingual dictionaries, although these were not explicitly referred to when answering questions or reviewing literary elements.

- Students in a general education science class were seated in rows with desks paired, although no discussion opportunities were provided for them to demonstrate their understanding of physical and chemical properties. Student engagement was lacking, as the teacher provided no demonstration of the task and no definition supports for the challenging academic vocabulary, and the teacher used verbal communication exclusively to all the students throughout the instruction. Additionally, students were unable to explain the purpose of a distributed worksheet, and three students provided different thoughts, including, “It is homework,” “I’m unsure,” and “It is the ‘do now.’”

- As a result, of the lack of clarity or defined lesson structure in the science class, students were neither able to remain intellectually engaged in the lesson nor to demonstrate their thinking. Conversely, in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) science class, students participated in a gallery walk regarding endangered species. Students were tasked with reading a series of posters, discussing some of their findings with a partner, and drawing conclusions to answer two questions. ELL students used sentence starters and relevant vocabulary supports to develop high-order thinking and to engage in their partnered discussions. Some of the students added additional concerns to their inferences about the need to remain steadfast concerning several of the marine animals.

- Several teachers attempted to provide structures for their students to be fully engaged in group discussions through partnered work or “silent conversations,” a strategy where partners converse through writing to one another rather than speaking. However their effectiveness varied greatly across classes. A math class with mostly ELL students was encouraged to “process your logical reasoning” when applying unit rate to solve real life problems and were given a model for their work on the front board. Similarly, grade six students in a social studies lesson, determined why civilizations are built near a river valley during a silent conversation using academic vocabulary. However, in many other classrooms, students were primarily listening to the teacher and recording notes from a slideshow presentation or bouncing their conversation back and forth between student and teacher.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders and staff ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts and make purposeful decisions that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order thinking skills.

Impact

Coherence and promotion of college and career readiness skills are embedded into instructional planning documents for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Curricular planning documents are aligned with the Common Core Learning Standards and individual lesson plan learning objectives are often written with language from the respective standard. For example, an ELA lesson plan lists standard “RL.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.” As such, the content objective is written for students to be able to analyze an article and answer, “Should U.S. governors be able to block Syrian refugees?” Math lesson planning documents also embed real world applications into their content. For example, a lesson plan designed to focus on using rate and ratio reasoning, included multi-step problems to determine which of two stores was having a bigger sale of video games.

- A lesson designed to have students solve real-life math problems using numerical and algebraic expressions and equations included an emphasis on making sense of problems and persevering in solving them. Challenge questions were provided for students who completed their work prior to the end of the instructional timeframe. They were directed to create their own two-step equation and solution. Three levels of worksheets were created for a science lesson to support engaging all students in applying rigorous habits when making inferences from reading non-fiction text. Additionally, lessons often emphasize academic vocabulary to challenge students’ understanding of spoken and written language. An academic vocabulary toolkit specifically designed to focus on cognates has been developed to support ELLs in emerging and transition classes. Many unit plans across content areas refer to the academic vocabulary toolkit as a resource for both individual and small group work. In a variety of content areas, discussion opportunities are planned for students to use the academic vocabulary toolkit with their peers at varying levels of proficiency.

- An emphasis on text-based evidence and writing using primary source documents has led to the purchase of several curricular resources, which address these instructional shifts. School leaders, in conjunction with teacher leaders, are building coherence across content areas and grades, so all students will be purposefully exposed to college and career readiness skills. Knowing a third of the students enrolled are classified as ELLs has led to the increased use of a digital platform for housing curricula, thus promoting further coherence with curricula that meets their needs.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

The school community is developing its use of online digital tracking assessment tools to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. However, teacher questioning and use of formative assessment practices during instruction are inconsistent.

Impact

Common assessment results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction at the team and classroom level, thus not consistently making effective adjustments to meet students learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Common assessments are administered to students across core content areas for identification of students’ most mistaken concepts. Teachers use the item analysis report to identify material that needs reteaching and reviews it in class. Attempts are made to discuss where students had misconceptions using a think-aloud approach during instruction. For example, English as a New Language (ENL) and ELA classes use online diagnostic assessment tools that provide disaggregated data, which is used to inform homogenous grouping of students during instruction. The teacher uses the online data, along with other formative assessment results from instruction, to create lessons and to clarify learning for students. However, improved results and increased understanding from reteaching common assessment misconceptions are not evident across the majority of the classes. The effective use of data by most teachers is neither consistent nor implemented according to school leader’s communications and expectations.

- During instruction, many teachers cold-called on the whole class for clarification of tasks and did not generate clear understanding or effective use of checks for understanding. Some classes appeared to have very limited use of questioning to check for understanding. For example, during a science lesson, students worked individually on laptops to further their understanding of heat transfer. However, at the end of watching a video and completing a quiz, no opportunity was provided for students to review the concepts or to correct any misconceptions they may have had prior to the bell ringing. Similar practice was evident in several other classes observed.

- Some teachers use exit tickets to assess students’ understanding of the day’s lessons. Additionally, some use an exit ticket analysis form to identify which students did, almost did, or did not meet the lesson objective. Once students are identified, the teacher considers in writing how they can address those misunderstandings. However, the reteaching strategies identified are often written in general terms that do not offer much clarity to ensure students will acquire the lesson objective any better than they had previously. For example, several reteaching strategies include, having students complete on-demand assessments, like a stop and jot, to assess understanding on the spot during instruction. It is unclear how having students self-assess or reflect on their current level of understanding more frequently, will increase student learning when they are not retaught the concept with a varied approach or scaffolds.
### Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff via digital means and in-house professional development, and further communicate those expectations to families regarding pathways connected to college and career readiness by using an open door policy.

#### Impact

Training and a system of accountability for staff connected to high expectations exists, and families understand those expectations for their children’s progress.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are made aware of what they need to work on and the expectations for success with curriculum, instruction, and assessment through professional development and collegial intervisitations. Teachers have frequent meetings with school leadership and peers regarding the elements of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* connected to college and career readiness. Staff was recently provided training on instructional techniques to engage students in “silent conversations.” The training was designed to support activities and assignments which would further engage students in their learning and promote student thinking. Teachers were provided checklists after the training to use in determining the effectiveness of their students’ engagement in “silent conversations.”

- Families are provided opportunities to attend workshops and to learn about online tools that provide math support for their children at home. During the workshop, parents are introduced to an adaptive online platform that was purchased for each individual student. Parents are provided guidance to help their children navigate through homework and independent practice. They are also provided instruction on how to use analytic features embedded within the online tool that provide insight to their children’s math usage and misconceptions. Teachers also communicate expectations regarding the use of the online tools as an instructional and assessment aid.

- Afternoon literacy and math classes are created to provide ELL students with essential support in ELA and math. Participation in the program requires parental approval and an awareness of how the program is designed to help students progress toward a pathway of college or career. Parents are also made aware of their children's progress in the program via an online database where they can view their grade and assignments in real time. Additionally, families note they are welcome to speak with their children’s teacher anytime, including Tuesdays and Thursdays afterschool, which is set aside for that purpose.

- During cabinet meetings, school leaders discuss trends from observations and establish professional development expectations. They use an online tracking tool to measure professional growth in alignment with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Teachers are also provided surveys to garner additional insight of what they feel they need regarding their own professional development. Recently, technology and math trainings were offered for teachers as per their request to improve instruction.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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</table>

### Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that meet regularly and that provide opportunities for ideas to be generated to support their professional growth.

### Impact

Inquiry collaborations have strengthened teacher instructional capacity and the promotion of school goals, while distributed leadership opportunities have provided teachers a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teams of teachers meet regularly to discuss student work and to create new goals that help grade or subject teams collaborate in ways they teach curriculum cohesively across contents. Through discussions, teachers define how they look at student work for consistency. Patterns and trends of students’ strengths support strengthening of teacher practices by identifying strategies that work in one class and might be used in another so teachers improve their pedagogy. For example, teachers review effective differentiated instructional strategies to support ENL students and then implement them in their class. Peer teachers will also sometimes intervisit to provide additional feedback that may further support their instructional development. For example, a science teacher was provided collegial feedback to allow opportunities for students to ask more questions of each other. The following instructional days, she made a conscious effort to allow more student questioning and less teacher direction. It was noted that it was productive in grades seven and eight, although found to be challenging in grade six.

- Teachers often suggest ideas for events that would contribute to student learning and culture. Recently, a teacher suggested having an International Day to represent the vast diversity of the student population, especially those classified as ELLs. The teacher was charged with creating the event. Similarly, a teacher wanted to create a basketball team that would help bring students together. A majority of the students who were selected for the premier team have seen growth in their academics and are “building friendships.” Students understand that because the teacher who created the team saw something special in them, they feel it is “a privilege and we have to keep our grades up…and participate and communicate with others.” Students further acknowledge it has “brought people together.”

- Much of the professional development is delivered by teachers on staff. For example, a recent professional development was led by several teachers to determine the impact of maintaining e-portfolios. Other sessions have focused on inquiry practices, Socratic seminars, silent conversations, and data analysis using class reports. Teachers value their role in supporting one another and the impact they have on contributing professionally to their own growth.

- Collaborations between teachers to address instructional challenges and identify next steps occur between teachers and mentors using an inquiry approach. Challenges addressed include noticing’s from peer visits, such as use of wait time, questioning techniques, and group work structures. Inquiry discussions identify what went well and which efforts promote more strategic implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.