Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts

Secondary School 13K265

101 Park Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11205

Principal: Michael Walker

Dates of Review:
April 3, 2017 - April 4, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Jennifer Eusanio
**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**

Dr. Susan S. McKinney Secondary School of the Arts serves students in grade 6 through grade 12. 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](http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm).

**School Quality Ratings**

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

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

Findings

School leaders communicate high expectations to staff relative to student engagement and planning rigorous questions in performance tasks. Staff members communicate high expectations and offer ongoing feedback to families towards course completion and credit accumulation.

Impact

Structures are in place ensuring a system of accountability for all staff members. Parents are aware of their children’s progress in meeting expectations towards post-secondary readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leader expectations are communicated through a variety of structures such as memoranda, emails, and meetings. One memorandum named *Staff Expectations 2017* indicates that during the second term, staff members ensure lesson plans incorporate data from formative assessments, include opportunities for incorporating core beliefs on instructional practices, use note taking tools and academic vocabulary. An instructional memo stated that lesson plans were to incorporate a range of recall to higher-order thinking questions as a method of assessing student understanding.

- Post-observation feedback ensures teachers are provided the necessary support related to the school’s expectations. Comments reflect references to the use of rubrics, accountable talk stems, use of annotation strategies and reinforcing academic vocabulary. Professional learning is offered and focuses on the school’s instructional foci, including rigor and increasing student engagement. During training, teachers viewed an instructional video on new strategies to support planning for rigorous instruction and implementing accountable talk practices.

- The school provides opportunities for families to engage with the school and learn about college and career opportunities. In addition, parents use online grading programs and progress reports to inform them as to their children’s achievement in content areas, and credit accumulation status. One parent shared that her child’s teacher called her regarding her son performance in math and provided him with extra work to practice at home. Other parents noted receiving similar support from school staff to make sure their children meet schoolwide expectations.
Findings

Teaching strategies and grouping have yet to consistently provide multiple entry points as demonstrated in student work products and discussions.

Impact

Missed opportunities for students to consistently work on challenging tasks and use higher-order thinking hinder cognitive engagement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- In one science class, students constructed models of roller coasters to make connections to the laws of conservation of energy. Working in groups, students applied their understanding of kinetic and potential energy and developed designs to include hills at various heights and curves which would increase energy at various points in the model. Students fully participated in the design and development of the roller coaster model sharing ideas on how to improve it. However, this level of engagement and participation was prevalent in only some classes.

- In a global history class, students worked at centers answering document-based questions. Although students were placed in ability-based groups, only some students worked collaboratively while other students were viewed either copying from one another or not fully engaged with the task. Additionally, in a math class, students were provided with calculators and direct support from teacher assistants. Yet, the support provided, whether in the form of prompting or the use of tools, resulted in only some students completing the task correctly.

- In an English class, students reviewed pictures as a means of understanding the concept of irony. Although, students were able to define irony using the pictures as a guide, the task only led students to provide descriptive responses, which lacked deeper analysis. Similarly, in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) English Language Arts (ELA) class, students, while working in groups, reviewed pictures from Egypt and shared with one another descriptions of what they saw. However, the level of the task required students to make descriptions and basic inferences.
### 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

The school’s curricula is aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, integrate the instructional shifts relative to text-based answers and application, and consistently provide tasks that require rigorous thinking habits.

#### Impact

Planned tasks emphasize higher-order thinking for all students promoting college and career readiness.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Curricula aligned with Common Core Standards are reflected in unit plans across subject areas. For the middle grades, teachers use *Scholastic Code X* for ELA and *Connected Math Program 3*. Consistent with high school curricula, teachers of other subject areas use the New York City Scope and Sequence to develop units for science and social studies. *EngageNY* is used to supplement modules as needed. Review of two ELA/Humanities unit plans show that in both grades six and seven emphasis is on reading and comprehending literary nonfiction and engaging in collaborative discussions with diverse partners. Similar to the middle school, the current English nine and ten unit plan reflect the same focus.

- The instructional shifts for English Language Arts and math are incorporated into unit plans and lesson plans. In a math plan, focus standards reflect the use of variables to represent two quantities in a real world problem, which aligns with the shift stressing application of knowledge. In another math unit plan, mathematical fluency is targeted. In an English nine unit, a focus on writing arguments to support claims using valid reasoning and relevant, sufficient evidence aligns with the shift involving text-based answers, and writing from various sources. This focus is also stressed for advanced placement (AP) English for eleventh and twelfth graders.

- Unit plans and tasks reflect use of high level questions and skills aligned with Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* protocol. In a living environment unit, one task asked students to create a public service announcement that educates the community about disease prevention. In a chemistry unit plan, students were to write a three-page essay comparing a chemical system to the concept of homeostasis in living things. In an ELA lesson plan for an ICT class, the guiding questions to be answered after reading the text include; asking what motivates the character to work hard and requires the student to decide if a situation is fair providing details to support their answer.
### 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

The use of rubrics and common assessments are used and analyzed to determine gaps in student progress towards meeting the goals set forth in unit plans.

#### Impact

Adjustments to instructional practices and actionable feedback to students ensure decision making at classroom and team levels support the needs of students.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Content-level teams have developed six-week summative assessments, which they carefully analyze. A *Standards Gap Analysis* document was created and is used to identify particular standards that students have not met. Instruction for the next marking period is then planned with these standards purposefully being addressed. Teachers use information on student trackers to develop these gap analyses and modify instruction or tasks. A review of an ELA and social studies analyses led to reinforcing the strategy main idea, evidence, link, conclude (MEL-CON) in classroom instruction, and the additional use of visuals.

- Teacher teams conduct gap analyses consistently throughout the year. In science, teachers have used this to reinforce graphing skills based on a review of data, which reflects this as an area of weakness. Teachers have adjusted their instruction to incorporate tasks to include reinforcement of specific skills connected with scaling coordinates. Other teacher teams have found students need additional instruction on citing text evidence to support claims and more opportunities to practice close reading and annotation.

- During an interview, students shared that their teachers provide feedback on their work both verbally and in writing. One student explained that her teacher’s feedback led to the revision of her college essay. Another shared that since he has been using a strategy his teacher gave him his writing has improved. This also has helped him maintain his grades. Other students shared positive results from the feedback provided by their teachers.
### Additional Finding

#### Quality Indicator:

| 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Proficient |

#### Findings

School leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback from cycles of observation and use the data to inform decisions on professional learning. Effective and highly effective staff members provide professional development for their peers.

#### Impact

The implementation of strategies to promote effective teacher practice and professional growth has resulted in positive increases this school year.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders observe teachers regularly. Based on teacher observation data and Monday trainings, school leaders develop a focus for each walkthrough to determine how teachers are using professional development strategies. A walkthrough was conducted to observe the rigor of teacher questioning, which was the topic of a recent professional development session. Student work and data is then used when developing the feedback provided the teachers. Following another team observation, school leaders reviewed the notes with the teacher to discuss instructional practices that could be employed to ensure increased student learning.

- Data from observations and student assessment is used to determine professional learning for staff. For example, strategies for developing rigorous performance tasks was one professional development topic. Additionally, the use of accountable talk structures has been provided where presenters used videos and modeled best practices. Teachers report that the professional learning is meaningful as well as practical.

- Lead teachers offer professional learning for staff members, which include intervisitations and workshops. One teacher shared that she had difficulty with using challenging texts and getting student fully engaged. After visiting the lead teacher’s classroom, she learned new strategies for text analysis and has been implementing them in her classroom. The theatre teacher who attended a three-year training program on the development of rubrics provided professional development sessions for her peers on the topic.
## 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**

The majority of teachers participate in department teams where discussion involves some analysis of student work and data connected to the school's goals.

**Impact**

Teacher teams are in the process of developing structures for consistently reviewing student data and work products to increase instructional capacity across the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Grade teams meet to compare and analyze student scholarship data, and discuss issues of credit accumulation, passing rates, and attendance. Content-level teams meet vertically to discuss lesson planning and implementation of the instructional shifts. One teacher explained they used one of their meetings to alter an ecology lesson for both grade six and eight. Teachers report that they share results from grade team work and data analysis at their content team meetings. During a team meeting, teachers reported that they have only met seven times during the school year to discuss student work and pedagogy as a department, limiting the consistency of data based discussions and capacity building.

- During a team meeting, grades six through twelve English teachers reviewed samples of student writing using a protocol to guide their discussion. The presenting teacher asked the team to focus their review on whether the students used the MEL-CON strategy effectively. Team members determined that although students had the structure of the MEL-CON strategy incorporated in their papers, they lacked depth in their analysis. Next steps included teaching elaboration skills and using specific questions to challenge the readers to analyze the text carefully.

- Gap analysis data was reviewed and the areas of weakness that surfaced included citing evidence and linking central ideas. Targeted students are students with disabilities and teachers keep track of their overall scores on each assessment. However, a review of student trackers and notes does not reflect a connection between the work of teacher teams and the review of student work and data based on these assessments. In addition, although students are tracked using these assessments, analysis to determine a relationship between changes in teacher practice and improved skill acquisition during the year has not been tracked consistently.