Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 281 Joseph B Cavallaro
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 21K281

8787 24th Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11214

Principal: Maria Bender

Dates of Review:
February 14, 2017 - February 15, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Michele Ashley
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

I.S. 281 Joseph B Cavallaro serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>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>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>
</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based collaborations on grade and content teams as well as a math task force focused on coherence across the grades. School leaders embed teacher leadership opportunities in the school structure on a variety of school level teams.

Impact
Professional collaborations have resulted in schoolwide coherence in mathematics and increased student achievement across all grade and content teams. Collaboration and effective teacher leadership allows teachers to play an integral role in decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of teachers are members of grade level content teams lead by teacher leaders. Team leaders prepare agendas and maintain collaborative logs using an online platform. Teams participate in four cycles of inquiry per year and monitor student performance on Common Core Learning Standards and skills for targeted subgroups of students in each cycle. Teachers share and implement best practices, which strengthen teacher capacity. A review of teacher survey responses and advance data demonstrates that teachers across content areas reflect on their practices and have demonstrated growth in Danielson Framework for Teaching, Domain Three, Instruction.

- Teacher teams use a Cycle of Inquiry template to gather and organize initial data, develop an implementation plan and reflect, and adjust instructional plans throughout the inquiry cycle. Teams monitor student performance and growth via baseline, mid-point, and culminating assessment data. At the end of each cycle, team members share learnings, data trends, and schoolwide implications. A review of cycle one templates reveal that target students across all content area teams demonstrated growth from the baseline assessment to the culminating assessment. For example, grade seven target students in a self-contained classroom increased from an average performance of forty-five percent to seventy-nine percent on citing text evidence from pre-test to the end of unit. Similar results were achieved across classrooms for targeted students and skills.

- School leaders provide leadership opportunities via designated teacher leader positions including, but not limited to, peer collaborative teachers, instructional and team leadership roles. Teachers lead and implement improvements in teaching and learning through their cycles of inquiry and the sharing of grade level best practices and learning across each content area. The Math Task Force builds coherence and impacts student learning across the school. Teachers on the task force share practices and design math performance tasks for teachers across all grades that strategically integrate real world examples and opportunities for students to write in the math content area. For example, teachers across grade seven used Cornell Notes to complete a recommended task. The Cornell notetaking sheet requires students to share their steps, illustrate their process and provide a written explanation.
Area of Focus

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

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices consistently use questioning and varied teacher and student support methods to provide entry points for students. Most classrooms provide opportunities for students to share their thinking in work products and discussions, however, teachers have yet to implement high quality supports and extensions.

Impact

Teachers’ use of high-level questioning and varied supports engage students in challenging tasks and high-level discussions across most classrooms, however, a lack of extensions and limited options for student leadership hinder students’ opportunities to lead discussions and tasks and take ownership of their learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms visited, teachers used a variety of verbal and written questions to prompt student thinking and engage all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities, in challenging tasks. In most classrooms teachers move to working groups to provide students with ongoing support and questions that engage students in tasks and allow them to share their thinking. In a social studies class, the teacher uses stations to provide groups of students with high level prompt questions to be answered from the perspective of different Americans including indentured servants, enslaved Africans, white women and plantation owners. Students in this class used prompts and teacher questions at their stations to effectively respond to and complete the task. Teachers have yet to provide students with high-quality supports and extensions that support students in engaging in these tasks independently.

- Across the majority of classrooms visited, teachers provided ongoing guidance to ensure that students demonstrate high levels of thinking and participation. Teachers across classrooms moved from group to group and used questions to push student thinking and prompt them to respond to their peers. In a math class, the teacher asked students to think about their partners process, asking “does it work and why?” In a social studies class, the teacher prompted groups to agree or disagree with their peers’ interpretations of a political cartoon. A lack of structure during the group activity hindered student independence and limited their ability to take ownership of the discussions.

- In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher assigned students to small groups based on their benchmark data and required them to discuss and independently respond to a written prompt question on Walt Whitman. The teacher reviewed academic vocabulary, clarified student roles as both speakers and listeners and provided students with a claim, evidence, and reasoning (CER) chart to support their responses. Students in this class shared their thinking openly with their peers and took notes when they heard new evidence. During the whole class share students responded freely to each other without the need for teacher prompting. The level of independence and ownership demonstrated in this classroom is not yet present across most classrooms.
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 faculty make purposeful decisions to ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and integrate academic vocabulary and writing from sources. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits including the citing of text-based evidence to support claims.

Impact

Curricular alignment to Common Core standards and the integration of selected shifts build coherence, and promote college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Faculty has made purposeful decisions to align the curricula to Common Core Learning Standards and embed academic vocabulary and their instructional focus on writing across the content areas. A review of curricula demonstrates that unit and lesson plans include the introduction of key vocabulary, critical thinking questions, and opportunities for students to share their thinking in writing. An ELA lesson requires students to convert narrative writing into dialogue, a social studies lesson uses prompts that require students to interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives, a math lesson requires students to create a legend and respond to word problems in complete sentences and a science lesson asks students to share a written reflection on why pedigree charts are important to human genetics.

- Across lesson plans reviewed, teachers plan for the introduction of key vocabulary or phrases at the beginning of a unit or lesson. An ELA lesson plan requires the teacher to introduce and define figurative language. This lesson also asks students to use the key words, contribute, develop, suggest and reveal, in a restate, answer, cite, and evidence (RACE) response. A science lesson plans for the teacher to introduce the terms pressure and air pressure using visual images to support comprehension.

- Across grades and content areas, teachers integrate writing from sources into the curricula and plan for students to support their claims with text-based evidence. Across content areas, teachers include CER charts to support students in selecting appropriate text-evidence to support their opinions and prove their claims. A science lesson asks students to use evidence from class notes and discussions to answer the question, “Can scientists experience air pressure on the moon?” The plan requires students to explain their reasoning. A United States Constitutional Convention Graphic Organizer poses questions and requires students to answer and explain with evidence.
### Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use and create content and genre specific rubrics and grading policies aligned to the curricula. Assessment practices reflect the use of teacher questioning, student checklists, and exit tickets to monitor student understanding.

#### Impact

Across most classrooms, teachers use data from student assessments to provide actionable feedback to students and make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Across content areas, teachers use and create rubrics aligned to the core curricula and units of study. In addition, teachers create rubrics that align to the variety of writing tasks across content areas. Rubrics align to the grading policy and assess student performance from level one (does not meet standard) to level four (exemplary or above standard). Levels may also assign points out of the total possible point earned. On an argumentative writing rubric, a level one earns between one and six points and a level four earns sixteen to twenty points.

- Rubrics are content specific and align to the specific tasks and skills being assessed. A math performance task rubric is aligned to the one to four grading policy and assesses performance in specific categories, including mathematical operations, mathematical errors, mathematical explanation, mathematical process, and paragraph construction. A review of student work reveals that students use rubrics, checklists, and teacher feedback to revise their work and enhance their performance. One student used teacher feedback on a student self-assessment checklist to revise their written response and further explain how the characters in their text affected one another.

- Across classrooms, visited teacher practices reflect the use of questioning, checklists, and exit tickets as a way to monitor student learning. Teachers across most classrooms moved from group to group posing questions and providing feedback that pushed students to think deeply and respond to teachers and their peers. Teachers use checklists to monitor student engagement during independent practice and use paper and electronic exit tickets to assess student learning at the end of tasks. Informal Observational Data sheets track student activity during do nows, group work, and individual tasks and assesses whether students start on time, remain on task, write in complete sentences, follow directions, and ask for help or clarifications. Teachers use data from checklists and exit tickets to make effective adjustments to lessons and assign students to working groups. For example, in a math lesson the teacher assigned students to working groups based on the previous lesson's exit ticket results. The teacher assigns six students to a teacher facilitated instructional group to support them in solving systems using elimination. Other students will work in triads to solve more difficult systems of equations independently.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating:</td>
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Findings

School leaders and staff consistently communicate with families using phone and robocalls, information sessions, and an interactive online grading platform. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to students via rubrics, teacher feedback, and celebrations of academic excellence.

Impact

Ongoing teacher feedback and guidance help families understand their child’s progress and prepares students for the next level of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate with families via phone calls and keep parents informed of pending school activities and important dates using robocalls. Parents and students have up to date access to student grades and teacher feedback using an online grading platform. Parents interviewed reported that they use the online platform to keep informed, check grades, and look for any missing homework assignments.

- School leaders and staff also hold ongoing information sessions to help families understand the expectations for student learning. Faculty held a parent orientation for each grade level in the month of September to welcome new parents and inform all parents of the grade level curriculum. During orientation, parents have the opportunity to meet with administration, visit classrooms and speak with their child’s teachers. In November, there is a High School Information Night on which faculty invite parents to meet with guidance staff to review the high school application process and meet with representatives from several local high schools. In addition, families can attend Family Literacy classes in which parents and children can participate in English Language Learning activities together.

- Teacher teams and staff provide students with clear expectations for success using rubrics and ongoing feedback on their progress. Faculty consistently celebrates leadership and academic performance to model expectations, highlight progress and achievement. Student representatives on the school government meet with school leadership monthly to share ideas and concerns from the student body. Faculty celebrates academic excellence, talent mastery and progress during assemblies, as well as, Arista, National Junior Honor Society, and American Society for Mechanical Engineers certification ceremonies.
**Findings**

School, teacher team, and task force leaders support the development of teachers with effective feedback from the strategic use of frequent cycles of observation. Faculty feedback captures instructional strengths, challenges and next steps.

**Impact**

Strategic cycles of formal and informal feedback articulates clear expectations for improvements in teacher practice, promotes teacher reflection and supports teachers’ growth in alignment with professional development goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders and teacher peers provide teachers with effective feedback and clear next steps through frequent cycles of formal and informal observations. Leadership strategically schedules inter-visitations, teacher support for novice teachers and targeted professional development. New teachers attend a New Teacher Orientation during the summer. An agenda from August 2016 includes a review of the Comprehensive Educational Plan, and new teacher handbook, and an orientation to the online grading platform and common assessment tool. A *New Teacher Mid-year Check-in* agenda from January 2017 includes a review of successes and challenges, sharing of best practices and the identification of next steps and available supports.

- Feedback from school leaders and teacher peers aligns to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and articulates strengths, challenges and next steps. Leadership has identified Domain 3, Instruction, as a schoolwide professional focus. A September 2016 memorandum requires all faculty to review each element of this domain as it “has the most impact on student learning” and will “help move effective practices into the realm of highly effective.” A review of formal and informal feedback reveals that school leaders align next steps to improvement in using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning and using assessment in instruction, in alignment with schoolwide professional learning goals. Feedback includes clear expectations for improvements in instructional practices and possible supports as needed. In one report, leadership highlighted the use of Socratic seminar as an instructional strength and recommends the use of a CER chart and the rotation of student roles to enhance speaking opportunities and engage all students in learning.

- Leadership strategically assigns professional development opportunities and ensures that teacher leaders receive feedback before they have the opportunity to turnkey learning to their peers. Leadership places turnkey professional development dates on the professional development log with recommendations for the appropriate audience. A review of the Professional Development Log for 2016-2017 reveals that teacher leaders have scheduled debriefs with school leadership after attending outside professional development sessions and a date is selected for the turnkey of information to the larger staff.