Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 285 Meyer Levin
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 18K285

5909 Beverly Rd.
Brooklyn
NY 11203

Principal: George Patterson

Dates of Review:
December 15, 2016 - December 16, 2016

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</table>
### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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>
</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>
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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 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>
</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>
</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>
</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>
</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>Area of Focus</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Findings

Teachers’ use of rubrics and grading practices are aligned with the school's curricula and provide actionable feedback to students and teachers regarding student achievement and next steps. Across classrooms, teachers consistently utilize conferencing and student self-assessment as ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Teachers and students are aware of student progress toward the standards and can speak thoughtfully about their next steps. Teachers make effective, on-the-spot adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers use transparent grading policies so that teachers, students and parents are aware of student achievement and know where individual students stand in mastery of specific Common Core standards, particularly in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. RALLY interim assessments are administered to students in six week cycles and the results of the assessments are shared with students to celebrate successes and pinpoint specific standards that students still need to work toward. Students are aware of their results and are given opportunities to be reflective about their progress on exams. The assessment results are used to create individualized instruction for students and are used to group students in classes across the subject areas, including science and social studies. Students are able to speak to their progress in specific standards and how that data is used to determine their grouping. For example, students in an eighth grade social studies class articulated that they were in a group together because they had demonstrated mastery of determining the central idea of a text, but were continuing to work on evaluating the validity of the argument in the passage.

- Teachers consistently use PupilPath to make grades and student progress clear to students and families. All school staff, including guidance counselors, other subject teachers and administrators have access to student records online and students have continuous access to their grades online so that they are aware of their achievement in the standards, as well as their grades in classwork, homework, projects and tests.

- Teachers and students use a common template to provide students with specific and actionable feedback connected to the rubric in use, whether it is for ELA, math, social studies or science. The template was created by an ELA teacher, and its use spread across the school. The template provides ratings and an area for teacher comment that reflects the work and next steps to guide future work. Teacher feedback to an eighth grade student by notes that the, “claim was clearly written with strong evidence.” next step is, “provide more evidence from other provided text.” Similarly, peer feedback given to students utilizes the same template with a similar focus on rubric-specific comments, as does teacher and peer feedback given to students in other subject areas.

- In a sixth grade writing class, like many classes, student groups worked together on a collaborative task and used a group work rubric to self- and peer-assess skills such as participation, understanding, quality of the work and collaboration. As peers grade one another, the teacher also circulated, taking conference notes connected to the standard and the group work rubric, asking purposeful questions to make redirect student thinking such as, “What part did she [the writer] miss?”; “Did the author get the story across to the reader?”; “What does this tell you about your own writing?” This was typical of teachers assessment practices across classrooms and reflects how teachers make on-the-spot adjustments for individual and groups of students.
Findings

School leaders and faculty are developing a process to regularly evaluate and adjust curricular and instructional practices in response to new and changing curricula and student learning needs. The same can be said for the school’s process for regularly evaluating and adjusting the use of organizational resources, the quality of teacher team work, and professional development practices, with particular attention to what teachers need to learn to support student mastery.

Impact

While the school is making adjustments to the school’s curricula, instructional practices and expectations for teacher team work and professional practices, the school leaders and faculty lack formal structures to evaluate those adjustments and memorialize the ways that the school is responding to student learning needs and the demands of the Common Core that produce positive results.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and faculty have adopted a data-driven instructional model in response to student learning needs as observed from New York State testing data in ELA and math, with a focus on building students’ conceptual understanding, and ability to communicate what they know in math. To that end, the school has adopted a new math curriculum this year, JUMP Math. Teachers, with guidance from curriculum developers and administrators, are implementing the new curriculum with fidelity with few adjustments to what is taught and how it is taught. Noticings about what is working in instruction, and what is not, are happening in informal conversations between teacher teams, coaches and administrators as they continue to implement the program with fidelity. As administrators and teachers noted, some students were observed in classes without access to tasks or unclear how to move forward when they had completed tasks. The school’s process to evaluate and adjust this curriculum for effectiveness currently is, as the principal noted, “to take a wait and see approach.”

- The school’s use of interim and end-of-unit assessments are aligned with the school’s goals for data-driven instruction; however, the addition of curricular resources and newer instructional strategies to facilitate data-driven instruction is not being memorialized in a way that is focused on impact and creating coherence of policies and practices across the school. Teachers are looking at assessment data and groups of students, but lack a formal structure for evaluating the proficiency of the data streams and subsequent adjustments that they are making, individually or as teams.

- The work of teacher teams is not being memorialized in a way that allows the school to be reflective about practices, changes in practice, and where teachers are putting their focus in lesson planning and assessment. While teachers are making adjustments to individual lesson plans, they are not refining the curriculum maps with adjustments where they are made. Similarly, teachers are creating new assessments for students in team meetings, but this work is not housed or shared in formal ways that allow them to memorialize the work of individual teachers or teams so that they can monitor their effectiveness and be reflective about practices that are working, and those that are not. While administrators sometimes participate in meetings, other times the monitoring of teacher team work is left to external coaches and curriculum developers, leading to a lack of consistency in creating coherence in teacher team work in curriculum and assessment practices. Combined with the teams’ shortcomings in memorializing their work, the school’s process for regularly evaluating the quality of teacher team work and organizational resources remains uneven.
Findings
The curricula are aligned to Common Core, and teachers make purposeful decisions to build coherence, with a particular focus on citing evidence from the text, building deep understanding in math, and strengthening student speaking and listening skills across the subject areas. Academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

Impact
The school’s curricula is rigorous, coherent, and emphasize habits and skills that prepare students for college and career across grades and subjects for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty ensure that students engage in rigorous, Common Core-aligned curricula that are culturally relevant and often interdisciplinary. School-designed units such as the school’s end-of-year Juneteenth unit provide students with an opportunity to engage in a project-based, interdisciplinary unit where students research an African-American scientist of their choosing, with attention to ELA, science and arts standards. This unit is purposefully placed at the end of the year for all students, to build coherence in instruction and ensure that student choice, and connections across the content areas, drive instruction leading to the summer vacation. Another culturally relevant unit on Black economic empowerment in seventh grade math, provide students with opportunities to go out into the community to record a real-life population sampling, in addition to focusing on other math standards on the grade, such as ratios and proportional relationships and multiplying and dividing rational numbers.

- Other school curricular resources include JUMP Math, Code X, Passport to Social studies and school-created science curricula. Teachers ensure rigorous habits and higher order skills for all students, including students with disabilities and ELLs with the addition resources like the RALLY passages to ensure that students are engaged in appropriately challenging texts and tasks. This focus takes shape primarily through teacher lesson plans, where provisions for students with disabilities currently exist within the school’s curricula. As an example, a seventh grade ELA curriculum map highlights essential questions, standards and student outcomes, as well as specific skills that all students are expected to master. Specific Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) questions tailored for individual learners and groups of students exist in the teacher lesson plans. In an eighth grade ELA lesson, the teacher tailored specific questions to groups of students in a close reading lesson about the life of Emmett Till. Similarly, differentiated texts, vocabulary supports and graphic organizers planned to ensure rigorous habits for all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs are included in teacher lesson plans.

- Units and lesson plans across the grades and content areas provide specific attention to the speaking and listening standards in the Common Core. Mini lessons, tasks and success criteria used in instruction speak to specific skills such as participation and use of academic language in classroom conversations. Typical of other lesson plans reviewed, a sixth grade ELA lesson included two learning targets; one on evaluating a piece of writing with a set of criteria and another on engaging in collaborative, academic discussions. As with other lesson plans, the mini lesson and planned questions promoted collaborative student dialogue.
## Additional Finding

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<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, including questioning and scaffolds, are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs that students learn best through small group, collaborative tasks in student-centered instruction. Work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation for all learners.

### Impact

Coherent teaching practices are engaging students in rigorous, Common Core-aligned tasks with scaffolds and supports that yield high levels of student thinking and participation for all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty believe that students learn best through collaborative learning in small groups, where teachers act as facilitators and learning happens through student-to-student discussions. In seven of the nine classes visited, across the subject areas, teachers engaged students in collaborative tasks. In a sixth grade Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) ELA class, students explored theme, author’s purpose and finding key ideas and details in a text in differentiated collaborative tasks that were tailored to the six groups of students in the class. The teachers gave the tasks to the student groups, who explored the text together and crafted responses to questions such as, “How would you have handled the situation if you were in the apprentice’s shoes?” and, “What conflicts did you see in the story and how were they resolved?” By giving the questions over to the student groups, students were able to share their thinking with one another in high-level discussions as the teachers acted as facilitators rather than leaders of group conversations.

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies to provide multiple entry points into the curricula for all learners, including students with disabilities and ELLs were consistent, and included purposeful questioning to individuals and groups. Scaffolds, such as guided note-takers, graphic organizers, and purposeful grouping of students based on strengths and weaknesses to promote student-to-student learning were evident. In a seventh grade classroom, students worked in small groups to peer edit a student-writing sample from another class. While all students used a common rubric in the academic task, some students were given sticky notes to create their comments, others were given vocabulary scaffolded note-takers or the school’s feedback template. The teacher conferred with groups, offering additional questions to promote student thinking such as, “How does this activity help you?” “How is this paper similar or different than yours?” and, “Given your discussion, what are your next steps in your own paper.” These student supports in tackling a challenging academic task are reflective of the practices observed across classrooms.

- High levels of student thinking and participation, in active small-group discussions was observed in seven of nine classes visited. Pacing of lessons generally enabled students to engage in discussions for at least twenty minutes and in one case, students were able to demonstrate ownership of their learning in an Advanced Placement (AP) history class. The teacher briefly modeled expectations for learning for students, before giving them the majority of the period to engage in rigorous discussions about the women’s suffrage movement as they collectively examined political cartoons and other primary sources that were prepared for students at their tables ahead of time.
**Additional Finding**

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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 for professionalism, data-drive instruction, communication and collaborative decision-making and provide training. School leaders and teachers consistently communicate expectations to families that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

**Impact**

A culture for learning that communicates high expectations, and accountability for them, is clear to staff, students and families while ongoing feedback and support help families understand student progress toward those expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leaders communicate clear, high expectations for staff about professionalism, instruction, communication with one another, students and families and the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* through a myriad of communication tools. Beginning with the staff handbook and continuing through memos, planning meetings and one-on-one conversations, the school leaders communicate high expectations for Common Core-aligned instruction for students. School leaders provide ample training and opportunities for professional collaboration for staff, including paraprofessionals, particularly connected to school goals for guided and reciprocal reading, math instruction, and how to use and interpret interim assessment data and classroom-level data to drive instruction for students at the classroom and grade level.

- Teacher observations and feedback conversations between teachers and administrators consistently include discussions of student data and explicitly connect teacher practice to student data. As an example, feedback from the school leader to a teacher describes questioning and assessment techniques that led to a high percentage of students’ demonstrating mastery of the learning objective and provides guidance for using formative assessment data to differentiate the lesson. Coaches are also a part of teacher team meetings to guide teachers in their understanding of data-driven instruction and individualizing expectations for student learning groups.

- School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness. Beginning with clearly laid out expectations in the parent handbook, grade level teams continue to make expectations clear through orientations on school policies, curriculum and instruction, student support and performing arts expectations. The parent coordinator and teachers also hold workshops on the Common Core standards and expectations in ELA and math and the school-wide open house provides an opportunity for parents to hear from academic departments, and hear from staff and students about sports, arts, and student government which help students to develop interests and talents connected to college and career.

- School leaders and staff offer ongoing feedback to help families understand their student’s progress toward their goals through constant communication with families, primarily through PupilPath, as well as through progress reports, report cards, and regular phone, email, and text message communications. Teachers make themselves available to families on Tuesdays and other days, and teachers, guidance, and school leaders have an open-door policy with families to discuss expectations and progress of students.
**Additional Finding**

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

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and the implementation of the Common Core. Teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

**Impact**

Structured professional collaborations, including data-driven instruction and inquiry, strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and improved student learning and progress toward goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers meet regularly in grade level or content teams across the grades to engage in structured, professional inquiry that leads to data-driven instruction. Teachers work to ensure alignment of the curricula to the Common Core, and make adjustments to instruction based on analysis of student performance on RALLY interim assessments. For example, the sixth grade ELA team reviews interim assessment results, the Common Core standards addressed in the exam questions, and deficiencies in student responses from the exam to modify lesson plans and strategies used in the next six weeks of instruction in the Code X curriculum.

- Similarly, the math teams, with support from external curriculum developers, review end-of-unit JUMP Math assessments to uncover student gaps in understanding and progress in the unit's standards by looking at student work, reviewing the curricular teaching strategies and ensuring coherence across classrooms and grades. This review of student work and teacher practice leads to adjustments in teacher practice and the creation or adjustment to exams. In an observation of a math team, teachers reviewed student performance from a baseline assessment and decided to create a new assessment with only the standards covered so far in their JUMP Math units. This ongoing collective analysis of student work, standards and curricula leads teachers to new understandings of both their practice and their students, and strengthens the instructional capacity of teachers.

- Teachers and coaches from across the content areas meet on common planning teams to compare student data from RALLY interim assessments to make adjustments for groups of students for whom they share a focus, identified as "whisper kids." The assessment data analysis is used to adjust instruction and groupings for the students who are identified as being on the cusp of moving to the next level on the New York State ELA or math exam. Teachers and coaches work together to identify skills of focus for groups of students, strategies from various instructional materials to support their improvement and prepare curricula for the groups that meet with teachers after school or on Saturdays. This data-driven instructional planning improves teacher practice and outcomes for groups of students.

- To further develop the instructional capacity of teachers and promote the school's goals, the school has an inquiry team comprised of twelve teachers from across the grades and subject areas. The team meets regularly to focus on strategies being implemented by teacher teams across the school to improve students' ability to cite evidence from text and watch videos of teacher practice with an eye toward building coherence across the school. The team develops possible next steps for lesson planning and shares with administrators and teachers across the school to strengthen the instructional capacity of teachers and their use of data to drive instruction.