Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Dock Street School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 13K313

19 Dock St.
Brooklyn
NY 11201

Principal: Melissa Vaughan

Dates of Review:
December 8, 2016 - December 9, 2016

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

Dock Street School 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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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, 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, Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<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, 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, 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, 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, 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, Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

Faculty and students use the five guiding principles to guide their approach to culture building. Leadership, faculty, and staff have structures in place to support the social-emotional and learning needs of students.

Impact

Community adherence to the five guiding principles that have resulted in a safe and inclusive culture that supports student leadership. Each student is well known by at least one adult and staff supports align with students’ needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Faculty and students interviewed align the schools positive culture with the five guiding principles: motivation, appreciation, endurance, triumph, and success (STEAM). Students refer to using STEAM as a way to guide their actions, and staff and students recite the Dock Street School Pledge daily during Morning Meeting. Each morning student volunteers lead the pledge from memory, which outlines the guiding principles and how students and staff can actualize the principles in the school community. During an observation of Morning Meeting, two students led their teachers and classmates in reciting the pledge. The pledge states, “We motivate others to strive for excellence. We appreciate the community around us. We endure the struggles to perfect our craft. We triumph in the success of our accomplishments. We will successfully conquer the challenge of a rigorous learning community.”

- Students have organized and formed a student government with representatives from class. The student government meets monthly with school leadership, has planned, and organized student and family functions that include a costume Jamboree for students only on October 31, 2016 and a Dock Street Thanksgiving Feast for students and families on November 22, 2016. The student government invited families to bring in traditional cultural dishes to share with the school community. One parent of a student from the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) class noted that the school makes every effort to integrate ASD students into all school activities. She shared that he loves school this year and has friends throughout the school.

- Student advisory, clubs, and the formation of a Student Life Center ensures that students are known well by at least one staff member and students know where to find guidance and support when needed. The Student Life Center provides access to the guidance counselor, social worker, and dean and parent coordinator. Students cited the Student Life Center as a place to find help and support. Students shared that staff in the Center help provide assistance with internships, high school applications, and peer mediation. Student advisors for each grade level follow an advisory syllabus that addresses self-esteem, study skills, conflict resolution, tolerance, and goal setting. Teachers and staff run student selected after school clubs that allow students to get to know teachers who do not instruct them during the day.

- School leadership informed students and families that the school uniform represents a dedication to the Dock Street mission and pledge. Dock Street students have a one hundred percent compliance rate for the school uniform. There were no student suspensions.
Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices align to the articulated belief that students learn best when they can think critically and teachers are providing students opportunities to share their thinking in discussions. Although students are engaged discussions across grades and content areas, some teachers have yet to provide these opportunities.

Impact

Most classrooms reflect the articulated belief about how students learn best, however, a lack of coherence across all classrooms prevents some students from sharing their thinking and participating at high levels.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership shared an articulated belief that students learn best when they are engaged in critical thinking. She shared that teachers support student learning through teaching practices that align to the guiding principles, open ended questions, and an application to real world situations. Across classrooms visited, teachers asked students open ended questions to engage them in discussions and made connections to real world problems. In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, the teacher asked students to identify points in their independent texts when their character had to make a choice and to predict based on their own experiences what that character might do in the future. One student shared that her character decided to keep a secret from her friends and that was a “major” choice. Another student predicted that his character will become adventurous in the absence of his parents. The questions posed in this classroom pushed students’ thinking and allowed them to use their real world experience to predict their characters next steps.

- In some classrooms visited, teachers did not pose questions that pushed student thinking forward or require them to explain their answers. In a math class, the teacher assigned students to groups to solve math equations using transformation and symmetry. Students in groups worked separately without sharing their thinking process. The teacher observed the groups and asked lower level questions that asked students to provide the name of the axis and whether it was positive or negative but did not provide a structure for students to discuss their process or explain their response. The teacher asked several students, “What happens to the X axis?” Most students responded it would change or stay the same.

- Across grades and content areas, students participated in lessons and activities at high levels. Most teachers provided students an opportunity for students to share their thinking through discussion and through their work products. In a science lesson, students worked collaboratively to create group presentations on the composition of the earth’s atmosphere. Students created two and three-dimensional models to present to their classmates. Peer groups asked high-level questions of their classmates and responded to questions as they presented. Students questioned each other’s process as well as the quality of the product presented. The level of discussion and high-level work products present in this classroom was not present in some of the classes visited.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards and integrate the use of academic vocabulary across grades and content areas. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits.

Impact

Alignment to standards and the integration of ELA shifts across content areas builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership and teachers purposefully selected curricula to align to Common Core and content standards. Faculty selected Connected Math Project 3 (CMP3) and Metamorphosis for math, Teachers College Reading and Writing Program for ELA, and the New York City Scope and Sequence for social studies and science with support from Urban Advantage for experiential education. Across content areas, lesson plans cite the aligned Common Core and content standards, incorporate academic vocabulary, and the use of text-based evidence. A social studies lesson cites the aligned speaking and listening standards and the New York State Social Studies Standard and highlights the following terms, Nile River, Tigris River, Euphrates River, Indus River cataracts, and delta. The lesson required students to conduct research on more than one river, compare, and contrast using evidence from texts.

- Lesson plans reviewed require all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, to engage with text and use text based evidence to support their claims and make predictions. An ELA lesson asked students to collect information on characters choices and essential moments in their text. Students were asked to take notes on post its or in their notebooks “according to their learning style” and use those notes to analyze their characters and discuss essential moments in the text with partners or in small groups. Plans recommend the pairing of ELLs and students with disabilities with partners for support.

- In lesson plans across content areas, teachers required students to use strategic thinking and extend their thinking through discussion and the creation of work products. Science lessons required students to design and construct models, and explain the phenomena using accurate terms and concepts. An Integrated Co-Teaching lesson asked students to identify the different types and explain their category and purpose using the terms fulcrum, lever, effort, resistance, and load. In a math lesson plan, the teacher required students to create unit rate tables and explain a “real life” situation when someone would use a unit rate. In a science lesson plan, students were required to question and critique their peers’ presentations on the earth’s atmosphere.
Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use portfolio rubrics and assessments aligned to the curricula. Teachers and students consistently check for understanding.

Impact

Teachers and students use data from rubrics and assessments to obtain actionable feedback regarding student achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across content areas, teachers use portfolio rubrics to assess the quality and progress of student work. All students are required to complete portfolios twice a year in ELA, math, science, social studies, and art. Teachers assess student portfolios using a four-point rubric that aligns to the content and ranges from zero, developing understanding, to three, exceeding standard. A science rubric assesses four categories that include hypothesis, procedure, data graph, and scientific explanation. A dance portfolio assesses progression of techniques, dance literacy, knowing and using art materials and resources, and responding to works of art.

- Teachers use rubrics to provide students with actionable feedback to make improvements their work. Students create drafts of portfolio assignments and receive rubric feedback and next steps for improvement before submitting final drafts to portfolios. One teacher stated in her science feedback, “You demonstrate independence and accuracy in sharing your scientific data. Next time, we will work on thoroughly communicating the findings.”

- Across grades and content areas, teachers use questioning, observation, exit tickets, and student self-assessments to check for understanding. Students use teacher feedback and rubrics to assess their progress and set goals for future assignments. Portfolio Assessment Cover Sheets include students’ self-assessments that require them to respond to two prompts, “Areas in which I have shown progress” and “Areas in which I still need to work.” On a social studies portfolio, one student highlighted their progress in comprehending historical concepts and planned next steps to improve in analyzing historical documents. On another portfolio, a student highlighted their progress in using relevant details and plans to improve in summarizing information. Teachers use student drafts, assessments, and exit tickets to conference with students, make adjustments to lessons and plan small group instruction.
Findings
School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff via a staff handbook, observation feedback, and professional development. School leaders and staff consistently communicate with families to offer ongoing support and share high expectations for students.

Impact
Consistent communication and support for teachers and families creates a culture of high expectations that holds faculty accountable for student learning and helps families understand student progress connected to a path towards college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership distributes a staff handbook entitled the *Principal Expectations and School Year at a Glance*. This handbook includes unit templates, weekly professional development dates, inquiry team assignments, and the *Administrative Observational Timeframe and Focus*. The handbook outlines expectations for the learning environment and instruction and lists the observational focus for observations from September to May. Foci include classroom observation, planning and preparation, questioning and instruction, and student and teacher data portfolios.

- School leadership provides training to support the instruction focus and to support schoolwide goals. Teachers participated in a Summer 2016 Institute on the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project and continue during the school year with on-site professional development. On-site sessions include lab-site demonstrations, study groups, and debrief sessions with a Teachers College consultant and school administration. Leadership has provided professional development on a variety of topics including the inquiry approach, analyzing well-developed structures in teacher teams, and how students learn best, assessing student portfolios, analyzing rigor, differentiation, *Blooms Taxonomy*, *Universal Design for Learning (UDL)*, and college and career readiness in instruction. Teachers provide leadership with reflections in response to professional development sessions and leadership provides teachers with observation checklists to support teachers in meeting expectations.

- School leaders and staff communicate with families via phone calls, parent-teacher conferences, progress reports and Jupiter Grades, an online grading platform. Parents shared that teachers communicate with them freely and often. Parents interviewed have access to their child’s grades and progress via Jupiter Grades and shared that they can reach teachers easily for support. Teachers distribute progress reports in between marking periods in October, December, March, and May. Parents participate in student-led conferences during which students share their progress, areas of need and set goals for learning. Parents volunteer to support school functions and have begun fund-raising efforts to support school initiatives, approaching community businesses for support.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

The majority of teachers is engaged in inquiry via content teams and consistently analyzes assessment data and student work for students they share.

Impact

Inquiry work supports the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts that has resulted in progress for students and improvements in teacher practice.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers meet weekly on vertical inquiry teams by content, which include ELA, math, arts, science, special education, and social studies. Each team is led by an instructional lead; instructional leads also meet weekly to share cross-content information such as the implementation of the Common Core Standards and instructional shifts. Inquiry teams set goals and create team action plans that align to schoolwide goals for improvement. Action plans include new strategies, timeframes, and purpose. A math action plan includes the implementation of the *stop, drop, and solve* strategy on Fridays to provide students the opportunity to apply skills taught in solving word problems in a timely manner.

- Teacher teams analyze student portfolios and data from common assessments to identify subgroup and bottom third data, and establish goals to support student growth. Teams collect data for these groups in data binders to review and adjust action plans as needed. Teachers shared that there has been student improvement because of the teamwork and new strategies. Assessment data has shown growth for grade six students in the use of factors and multiples, for grade seven in adding and subtracting integers, and for grade eight in operations that include exponents.

- Teachers interviewed shared that teacher teams have made improvements in their capacity to plan for instruction by following the schoolwide template and planning lessons together as a team. School leadership shared that teachers have made improvements in their teaching capacity based on informal observations. Leadership has observed improvements in designing coherent instruction, (Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, Domain 1e) and engaging students in learning (Danielson *Framework for Teaching*, Domain 3c).