Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 347 School of Humanities
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 32K347
35 Starr St.
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: John Barbella

Dates of Review:
February 7, 2017 - February 8, 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. 347 School of Humanities serves students in grade six through grade eight. 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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<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>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Systems for Improvement

<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</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>Additional Finding</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use content and unit specific rubrics and a *Uniform Grading Criteria* that is aligned to the school’s curricula. Teachers use data from common assessments to track individual and group progress, adjust instruction and inform their feedback to all students.

Impact

Teachers use data to develop a clear portrait of student progress and provide students with meaningful feedback. Teachers track student progress to create *Class Smart Goals* and make effective adjustments to curricula that result in increased student mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- The vast majority of classrooms utilize content specific rubrics aligned to the curricula that offer a clear picture of student mastery based on specific learning traits and assessed along a three or four point scale. A *Uniform Grading Criteria* is in place that assigns exact weights to each criterion and is uploaded to an online grading platform to ensure consistency across grades and content areas. Sample rubrics reviewed identify the specific traits to be learned and how to assess them on a range from attempting standards (level one) to exceeding standards (level four). On the information section of a social studies rubric, the teacher identified that the student demonstrated a clear understanding of the topic but was missing minor facts and details, and in the presentation category the teacher noted that the piece was organized but had minor errors in spelling and grammar.

- Teacher feedback includes next steps that align to rubric performance skills identified and incorporate the Common Core Standards. Teachers prepare rubrics, checklists, and goal setting templates that help students identify their strengths and areas in need of improvement. A review of student work folders, bulletin boards, and student work samples revealed that students use teacher feedback to make revisions to their work and set personal learning goals. Students use goals setting templates to identify skills learned, establish goals and action plans, and articulate the criteria for success. On a math template, a student who achieved 70 percent on a mid-unit test set a goal to achieve 80 percent on the end of unit test. This student noted he is able to find the reciprocal of a fraction, invert and multiply, and convert mixed numbers to improper fractions. To achieve his goal, he would ask questions, complete next steps on all exit tickets, and work with a partner who understands. This student also noted that he would know he had achieved his goal when he could divide two fractions, divide multi-digit numbers, and add, subtract, multiply, and divide decimals as identified in the Common Core Standards for the unit.

- Teachers use pre, mid, and post-unit assessments to track student progress. Teachers set class learning goals based on student performance and design interventions to increase student performance. A review of teacher data analysis and tracking tools demonstrated that teachers’ instruction decisions have led to improvements for all students, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. For example, a comparison of ELLs performance averages on a September 2016 vocabulary pre-assessment and December 2016 mid-year assessment demonstrated that grade six students increased from 25 percent to 51 percent, grade seven increased from 22 percent to 61 percent and grade eight increased from 26 percent to 64 percent.
### Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Across classrooms teachers differentiate tasks, graphic organizers, and support to engage all learners in meaningful discussions. Some teachers have begun to develop student ownership of discussions and incorporated high quality extensions for tasks; although this practice is not yet across the vast majority of classrooms.

**Impact**

Differentiated tasks and accountable talk strategies engage a diversity of learners in challenging tasks where they can demonstrate their thinking in work products and discussions. However, most activities are teacher directed with the limited use of extensions and student-led discussions hindering opportunities for ownership of learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Across classrooms teachers provided students with graphic organizers and visual supports as well as verbal and written directions to engage students in challenging tasks. Academic and content specific word walls included definitions, examples, and images. Teachers also provide students opportunities to work collaboratively and receive the support of their peers. During a math lesson the teacher reviewed the directions for a group task and provided students with written directions. Students worked in small groups to demonstrate their understanding of slope on a graph using classroom floor tiles and masking tape. The clarity of expectations and supports provided in this lesson were observed across most classrooms, however, some teachers failed to provide clear instructions and supports that allowed all students access. In a science classroom, students were assigned partners to create simply machines, however, a lack of guidance and clarity of the learning objective limited their ability to demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work products.

- Students across content areas were required to provide evidence for their claims and be able to explain their answers. In social studies, the teachers asked students high level questions that required them to share their thinking and provide text-based evidence for their responses. The teacher provided sentence stems to get students started and sent students back to the text to find evidence to support and explain their answers. Students consistently added text evidence to their responses after conferring with the teacher. This level of engagement was evident across most classrooms and engaged most students in challenging tasks. However, in some classrooms students who finished early or students leading group activities waited for group members to “catch up.”

- Across grades and content areas teachers provide opportunities for students to engage whole group, partner, and small group discussions using accountable talk stems. Across classrooms visited, teachers used questions to prompt students to share and explain their thinking to their peers. In an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson the teacher encourage the students read the assigned Brown v. Board of Education and Little Rock Nine articles and “talk” as she visited each group. Students responded to teacher questions as she moved from group to group pushing students to share the “gist” of the article. Students used stems to agree, disagree, and clarify statements of their peers. In another classroom, students participated in a Socratic Seminar to develop their own questions and support their peers in refining their arguments and presentation skills. The level of ownership present in this classroom is not yet present across the majority of 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 ensure that curricula are aligned to content and Common Core Learning Standards and integrate academic vocabulary and the citing of evidence to support claims. Curricula and lessons include plans for variations in text levels, graphic organizers and teacher support.

Impact

Alignment to the Common Core, purposeful integration of the instructional shifts, and data informed revisions has built coherence across content areas and provides access for a diversity of learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Across grades and content areas the majority of teachers include the content or Common Core Learning Standard aligned to the identified aim, learning objective or teaching point. Across lesson plans teachers highlight key vocabulary to be introduced during the lesson or unit. Lesson plans include word words that include written definition of key vocabulary and word walls with visual examples. A math lesson included definitions for like terms, variable, term, coefficient, constant, and combining like terms. An ELA lesson included a visual word wall to define the terms squirmed, waging, prohibited and facilities. A science lesson included visuals for wheel and axle, pulley, screw, lever, inclined plan, and wedge.

- Across content areas lesson plans include opportunities for students to support their claims with text based evidence. An ELA lesson requires students to use evidence from an informational text to investigate whether adventurers should be held responsible for their own rescue and a social studies lesson requires student to use primary and secondary sources to investigate the characteristics and differences of ancient civilizations.

- Across grades and content areas, lesson plans include plans to different the content, process and product for students. A math lesson identified groups of students that would receive differentiated scaffolds depending on their performance levels and learning plan. That lesson plan stated that students who answered the previous day's do now incorrectly would receive a scaffold with the rules for adding and subtracting integers. It also stated that ELLs would have access to an interactive word wall on which they can reference examples of an expression and the teacher would group ELLs with a classmate who can speak their home language. A social studies lesson planned for the use of leveled texts to support struggling and advanced readers, and differentiated graphic organizers and exit tickets that included sentence starters to help ELLs and struggling writers to convey the most important information.
Findings

Teachers and staff establish a culture of high expectations via rubrics, goal setting and ongoing support for students. School leaders and staff consistently communicate with families via surveys, telephone, email, and family engagement activities.

Impact

Consistent communication, clear expectations and detailed feedback help families understand how to support their child’s progress and prepares students for their next steps in learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership surveyed parents in September and November 2016 to gather information on parent needs and preferences for workshop topics. Based on feedback from parents, school leaders and staff designed monthly parent workshops and created a parent workshop calendar. Parents voiced a high interest in bullying and a Bullying and cyber security workshop was presented in January 2017. Additional parent workshop titles include homework without tears, Job hunting, Common Core, and Transition to high school.

- School leaders and staff begin the school year with grade level Open House sessions where parents attend a meet with administration and staff and then break into grade specific sessions with grade level staff. Grade six and seven parents review the requirements and expectations of learning and an overview of the curriculum and grade eight parents review the high school admission process and a question and answer segment. Throughout the year, school leaders and teachers continue to communicate with families via telephone, school messenger, a monthly newsletter, and the online grading platform. Parents interviewed shared that the school communicates with them frequently and all of the parents present reported that they use the online platform to stay up to date on their child’s progress.

- Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning and consistently communicate high expectations for all students via Common Core aligned rubrics and opportunities for students to build college and career readiness skills. Teachers distribute a Grade 8 Exit Project student handbook that outlines the three components of the project, which include research, writing and presentation skills. Within the handbook is an intent form to be signed by students and parents that confirm the student’s topic, area of focus and research question. Students participate in research opportunities, college trips and are provided with Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) preparatory classes and Brooklyn College Experience Day on which teachers lead students on a campus tour, workshops and discussions with Brooklyn College students and staff.

- Students report that they receive support on completing their high school applications and that the school celebrates success with Honor Roll and Arista National Junior Honor Society ceremonies. Students interviewed feel that research projects, honors classes and Model United Nations opportunities prepare them for the challenges of their next level of learning. According to the 2015-2016 School Quality Snapshot eighty-three percent of this school’s former grade eight students earned enough high school credit in grade nine to be on track for gradation.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

School and teacher leaders support the development of teachers with targeted feedback and next steps and the strategic use of observations and inter-visitation as well as the analysis of student data. Feedback to teachers analyzes student and teacher work to capture teacher strengths, challenges and next steps.

Impact

School leaders and teachers articulate clear expectations for teacher improvement that aligns with individual and school level goals and promotes teacher growth and reflective practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School and teacher leaders support the development of teachers with targeted professional development and the strategic use of observation and feedback. Leaders created an I.S. 347 Observation Calendar for 2016-2017 that outlines the months or observations and the administrator that will conduct the observation. Particular teachers receive additional observations based on areas of need. School and teacher leaders provide additional non-evaluative observations and feedback to support teacher growth, as well as, scheduled targeted inter-visitations. Intervisitations focus on individual and school level areas focus and require teachers to respond to guiding questions and provide low inference information on what teachers and students are doing.

- Teachers complete Common Planning Inter-Visit sheets and I.S. 347 Walkthrough Checklists to provide their peers with constructive feedback that is used to improve learning environments and revise planning. A review of completed teacher feedback documents showed that teachers provide their colleagues with low inference observations and feedback comments. A common planning intervisitation sheet identified an instructional focus on student-to-student discussion and guiding questions that focus on what teachers are doing and asking, and what students are doing and saying. One walkthrough checklist noted that a teacher reviewed student work folders and interactive word walls, recommends that their colleague update work folders to include work that is more current, and enhance word walls with Spanish words and pictures for ELLs. Teachers shared that they use peer feedback to reflect and adjust their planning and learning environments.

- Feedback to teachers includes teachers’ strengths, areas of need, and clear next steps for improvement. The support of Peer Collaborative and Model Teachers focuses on identified school level professional development goals. Teachers provide support to increase student-to-student discussions and questioning techniques that align with teacher professional goals. A review of leader feedback to teachers demonstrates that leaders align their feedback to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and targets particular areas for growth for teachers. Leaders outline next steps for improvement that teachers add to individual professional development plans as needed.

- Teachers complete Mid-Year Reflection Questions for Professional Growth before mid-year conferences with school leadership. Leaders ask teachers to reflect on administrative input and school wide expectations to identify goals they will continue to work on and improve for the year. One teacher’s reflection highlights using questioning and discussion techniques as an area leadership identified as a new area of strength in a January observation, but notes that she wishes to continue to strengthen her practice in this domain.
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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</thead>
</table>

Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations on grade and content teams. Teacher teams analyze unit and benchmark assessment data for students in their class and on the grade.

Impact

Teacher teamwork promotes the achievement of school level goals and is clearly align to Common Core Standards. Teacher on teams collaborate to establish learning goals and plan interventions that enhance teacher capacity and lead to progress for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers engage in professional collaborations on grade level content teams. Teachers meet weekly for common planning and inquiry during assigned periods in the school schedule. A teacher leads each meeting and follows a structured agenda. A grade six common planning agenda focuses on the results of a Mid-Unit 2 Assessment on dividing fractions. The agenda required the team to analyze student data to identify common strengths and misconceptions and develop next steps to “prepare students for the end-unit assessment.”

- Teachers interviewed shared that collaborations on teacher teams has enhances their teaching practices and advanced their capacity by providing them with new strategies to implement across the grade. Teacher shared that work on teams helps them to develop higher order thinking problems and use identified misconceptions to plan interventions. Leadership also reports that teachers have demonstrated improvements in performance based on their collaborative work. A review of advance data demonstrates that at least six teachers have demonstrated improvement in Danielson Framework for Teaching domain 3b, Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques.

- Teacher teams analyze student work and assessment data to develop new strategies that support student progress. A review of teacher analysis tools reveals that teachers compare pre-assessment and mid-assessment data to monitor student progress. Teachers had identified goals for targeted ELLs and supported them in applying selected reading strategies including the use of context clues, prefixes, and suffixes. A review of student data and teacher analysis sheets revealed that the targeted ELLs in grades six, seven, and eight improved their average performance from the pre-assessment to the mid-unit assessment for unit one. A review of data analysis by the social studies team also revealed increases in student performance from the baseline task to the unit one performance task. Students with special needs in grades six, seven, and eight demonstrated increases of twelve, ten, and three percent respectively.