Quality Review Report
2016-2017

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 32K349
35 Starr St.
Brooklyn
NY 11221

Principal: Michael Loughren

Dates of Review:
April 6, 2017 - April 7, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Marion Wilson
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>
</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>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>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>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

**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>Area of Celebration</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>Area of Focus</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.3 Leveraging Resources</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders provide time in the master schedule to afford teachers multiple opportunities during the week to meet and complete their professional responsibilities. Hiring practices and teacher assignments help to provide a lower student-to-teacher ratio for classes with most of the English Language Learners (ELLs) and students and disabilities.

Impact

Because teachers have additional planning periods, they can now help improve instruction and engage students in challenging academic tasks and produce meaningful work products. Newly formed positions and new hires effectively support student groupings for most students, especially ELLs, to work cooperatively in groups, write more fluently in English, and engage in student to student conversations.

Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet regularly as department and content area teams to implement the Data Wise Improvement process. Teachers are scheduled to meet twice weekly, one time as a grade team meeting and once in their content area. Teachers meet during these set times to discuss students who are struggling and implement intervention plans to support the student across content areas. Teachers have opportunities to plan inter-disciplinary lessons and make cross-curricular connections during this time-period. Teachers also utilize this allotted time to review initial diagnostic data and discuss students’ needs in detail. After the second diagnostic exam is administered, teachers meet individually with students to review iReady data to make informed decisions. School leaders determined that students with disabilities needed more support and revised teaching programs, and specifically place teachers with expertise in programs for push-in and pull-out services.

- The principal creates learning opportunities for continued collaboration amongst teachers to help them support students’ learning needs. To improve instruction, he coordinated the hiring of an iReady teacher whose sole purpose is to ensure that each student is tested and provide supports to ensure students are making progress using this resource. The school’s data specialist, along with a dedicated reading teacher, helps to provide services for individual and groups of students based on their iReady results. In addition, the principal ensures that there are language specialists and teachers trained to support ELLs and students with disabilities including providing for additional integrated co-teaching models and more English as a New Language (ENL) teachers for each grade level. There is coordination among the different specialists hired to ensure that students are reading better while incorporating language acquisition skills. As a result, there has been a shift in the number of emergent students who are now on the trajectory to becoming more proficient in English.

- There is also a master teacher who was identified to support struggling learners and serve as a resource for teachers of subgroups. Specially trained teachers help to support students in the school’s transitional bilingual program for newly arrived immigrant students. Teachers who are hired generally are bilingual and speak Spanish to help students better adjust and to capitalize on the benefits of their native language. In addition, staff members are fully trained in working with students who are performing at differing levels of proficiency including those who are transitioning and commanding the English language.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicato... | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: Proficient |

Findings
Most of the teachers are using a protocol to review student work with the Common Core Learning Standards and with a focus on the instructional shifts; however, it has not resulted in schoolwide instructional coherence. Structures are in place to allow teachers to have a key voice in decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Impact
Professional collaborations are helping teachers across grades and departments implement effective teaching strategies to support improved student learning and continue to strengthen the capacity of most teachers but has not led to mastery of goals for groups of students. While teachers serve as mentors, grade leaders, and master teachers, structures are not yet deeply rooted in the school’s day-to-day operations for strategic decision making.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teacher teams collaborate using a structured protocol to review student work and share best practices to promote student performance for most learners. Teachers across departments work closely with the master teacher and data specialist to notice trends and patterns on assessment data to plan supports and next steps in their instructional practice. Teachers pinpoint the specific standards of focus that students have trouble, across grades, and have utilized formal and informal assessment data. This provides simulated practice with students making more inferences and comparing or contrasting their writing in a more meaningful way. Teachers shared that iReady allows them to look for trends and patterns in student performance and share key strategies with each other which is helping them become more reflective about their practices. The work of teacher teams has not fully resulted in increased student achievement for all learners based on standardized assessment results.

- Professional collaborations on teams help teachers work on integrating the instructional shifts into instruction across grades and subjects. Teachers shared that the teachers’ meeting is part of the non-negotiable expectation established by the principal and they ensure that they use their time wisely to meet and respond to student learning needs through an inquiry based approach. Because of inquiry work, for example, teachers noticed that there was significant growth for the eighth-grade students compared to the test administered earlier in the school year. There were some concerns with the constructive responses in math and after analyzing the factors, inquiry teams created tasks for in-class activities that were more closely aligned to the examples from the test. However, there are some gaps in this level of functioning across the vast majority of teacher teams.

- School leaders and teachers shared various examples of how teachers contribute to decisions that affect student learning such as curricula modifications, the teacher hiring process, and in suggesting new programs for the school. For example, during the teacher team meeting teachers shared that a new curriculum was instrumental in helping to guide school improvement efforts. Therefore, teachers decided to put together a curriculum map that combined the new curriculum’s pacing calendar with existing units. During the teacher team meeting, teachers shared that they are also invited to serve on hiring committees, propose new tools and strategies, and demonstrate innovation in teaching with the support from administration. Teachers also recommended that small groups should be created for students to have a dedicated period in school to access the iReady program and resources. Although teachers have a voice in key decisions they have not yet leveraged structures for strategic decision making that affect greater student achievement.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Teachers adapt curricula aligned with the Common Core and content standards and integrate the use of citing evidence from texts to support ideas and arguments, develop writing skills, and annotate reading selections in English Language Arts. Instructional tasks consistently emphasize rigorous tasks and cognitive engagement for students with disabilities and ELLs.

Impact

Planning for instructional coherence is consistent in written documents for students with disabilities and ELLs. College and career readiness skills, such as opportunities to research, communicate in written and verbal forms, and work collaboratively, were evident across most curricula documents.

Supporting Evidence

- Written plans incorporate the instructional shifts and evidence purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. The school now utilizes resources from Teachers College Writing Reading Program (TCWRP) and EngageNY to supplement their existing curriculum maps. Teachers across teams and departments ensure that they incorporate elements from each subject area to develop maps based on the standards they have prioritized on each department’s pacing calendar. School faculty plan units that offer students time to work cooperatively in groups, cite evidence to support their thinking, and be exposed to range of complex texts. Curricula plans also incorporate various strategies to support student understanding. For example, in a math lesson plan, one component of the plan listed ways to help students study the problem, organize the facts, line up a plan, verify their computation, and then examine their answers (SOLVE) for complex math word problems. Another example showed a reading unit which consistently required students to take meaningful notes to capture information about what they were reading. Unit plans incorporate scaffolds such as listing the students’ reading level and providing the appropriate leveled text for the activity, small-group instruction, thinking maps, and varied graphic organizers to help support students’ organization of their thoughts and ideas. Teachers’ written plans ensure that the curricula materials provide a multi-pronged approach when teachers are planning readings for a diversity of learners including the use of modified tasks and checklists, video presentations, and visual representations to support struggling readers and smaller group populations.

- Teachers create lesson plans that have certain properties such as Common Core standards, rigorous grade level appropriate tasks, and higher-order thinking questions. Written plans are created so that they are more suitable and specific to their student population. Most lesson plans follow a shared lesson-plan format which focuses on targeted vocabulary focus skills, texts, guiding questions, and assessment for learning techniques related to the instructional shifts. The plans presented during the visit provide varying degrees of higher-order thinking skills for students to identify concepts, compare or contrast ideas, evaluate sources, and analyze author’s purpose.

- Teachers and school leaders jointly determined that some curricula resources were not meeting the needs of their diverse learners so they incorporated varied resources to support planning. Some lesson plans emphasize rigorous tasks which are explicitly connected to the most prioritized standards. In one plan, students were expected to determine some possible applications for linear equations through questions such as, “What does the slope represent in this real-world problem?” in lessons. Tasks were outlined in some detail with differentiation to account for the varying needs of groups of students.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

Classroom teaching strategies across most classes visited addressed the different learning styles and needs of all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities. Most student writing and discussion reflected high levels of critical thinking and rigorous content.

Impact

Students are provided with visual tools or teacher supports that allow them to appropriately engage in challenging tasks independently. There is consistency of student thinking and participation across most classes in the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Most teachers use differentiated content and processes to engage students in rigorous learning activities. For example, one teacher assigned a group of students to interpret word problems of varying levels of difficulty to create a table, equation, and a graph. These tasks included supports for students including those who needed sentence starters, the use of graphing paper, or a teacher created reference tool. In another class visited, an English Language Arts (ELA) class, the essential question students were required to answer by the end of the lesson was, “How does argumentation lead to active questioning and deeper consideration of other perspectives?” Students were clear about their roles and the purpose of the activity. They could speak to the work and categorized the assignment as being challenging for them to complete, as the answers to questions were not literal or easily derived from the reading materials. Most students were working in small groups, had access to videos or online resources, and some students were researching information to support their answers.

- In most classes, lessons provide students with visible, tactile, and auditory learning supports to support them in completing activities with minimal teacher assistance. Students had access to a PowerPoint presentation displayed on the interactive whiteboard to assist them during a learning activity. The tasks required students to make real-world connections and applications, while explaining their thinking about the activity. Most teachers communicated the expectation that students had to explain their thinking. In a self-contained social studies class, the teacher asked students to work on their perspective of the roles of Great Britain and America during the war. Students had different picture prompts that they were reviewing and had to analyze clues from the picture and then write an essay about their discussion. Students were all highly engaged in the lesson and had different supports including accountable-talk stems, a teacher created note-taking tool, vocabulary word banks, and sentence starters. Students asked each other questions to push their thinking and prompted each other to cite evidence to support their thinking.

- Most teachers are providing instruction that is student centered. During a science lesson, students were working in groups to make predictions and inferences to interpret information garnered from observations. Students spoke to one another about elements of the Earth’s core and provided data-based rationale for their thinking. In most lessons, activities had a balance between student- and teacher-led with opportunities for students to engage in conversations around open-ended questions and display critical thinking skills.
Findings
The school uses various rubrics that are aligned to GOMath! and TCWRP. The school uses the results from common assessments to determine student progress toward individual goals.

Impact
Student friendly rubrics and teacher-created assessment results provide actionable feedback to both students and teachers regarding student achievement. The results from iReady are used to track progress towards goals and inform both curricula and instructional adjustments.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal articulated that students are expected to receive feedback that includes actionable next steps that they should be able to strive towards. There are checklists and rubrics available for tasks and activities. In addition, rubrics are designed to include specific standards that students most struggle with. Most students receive feedback from teachers that provides next steps for improvement so that students are able to follow and make the necessary changes to their work. During the small student group meeting, one shared a rubric about an essay she had written about the Diary of Anne Frank. She shared that feedback from her teacher included, “Your essay is interesting to read, but you needed to act more facts. Maybe if you watched the movie in addition to reading the book, it would help you add more factual details.” The student shared that she was then able to better revise her essay based on the feedback comments. Most students shared that they receive actionable verbal and written feedback from their teachers in their core courses.

- Teachers review the instructional grouping profile report from iReady help teachers gather information to help drive instructional modifications, revise curriculum, and make classroom level decisions to support student progress. The results of multiple sources of data including teachers’ conference notes and formative assessment data help teachers provide targeted interventions for individual students. School faculty analyze reading, math, and standards based assessment data to determine how students are doing in relation to focus standards. Most teachers have access to reading levels of students using running records. Teachers across departments share assessment data on student performance with each other on a regular basis. For example, iReady is being utilized to help sort, track, and monitor the progress of students across grades and departments to adjust decisions made at the classroom and teacher team levels.

- Teachers have opportunities to collaborate on designing and modifying common grade-wide, curricula-aligned assessments, rubrics to address student and subgroup learning needs. The information is used to track student progress towards goals across grades and most subject areas. When teachers analyzed the results from the most recent assessment, they noticed that students were struggling with writing a viable argument in both math and ELA, they developed school wide strategies to support student understanding. Students shared that this strategy is helping them perform better on multi-step word problems and on constructed responses. Based on the results from a recent assessment, students’ average scale score increased by 25 points in reading and 12 average scale score points in math. More students are reading on grade level. There was a noted improvement in the comparison of improved quality of student work products in their reviews since the beginning of the school year. Teachers determine topics based on the results of common assessments related to the instructional shifts to note student performance in reading and math. Furthermore, iReady results help teachers decide their next steps in teaching and note trends and patterns in relation to students’ reading and math goals.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Proficient |

Findings
School leaders communicate high expectations to staff and parents about instructional practices, programs, and student achievement. Parents attend workshops and informational sessions hosted by the school on a regular basis.

Impact
Teachers are aware of the expectations for planning, preparation, teaching and learning because administration provides clearly outlined communication tools including a handbook and weekly emails. Parents have opportunities to understand the progress of their children through progress reports and regular phone calls made home by the teacher.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal believes that students learn best when they are engaged in rigorous learning activities that provide multiple entry points. The principal shares best practices with teachers and uses mentor and lead teachers to help him convey these messages across the school. High expectations are also reinforced through notices displayed around the school and from frequent emails sent out to staff. The instructional focus of the school is on daily written and verbal tasks to deepen comprehension in all tasks across all content areas. Students are required to read and cite evidence from texts to support ideas and arguments, develop writing skills, annotate reading selections, and create summaries based on what they have read. As a result, most teachers plan lessons according to this expectation.

- Parents understand what is expected of their children and can monitor their progress regularly through conversations with teachers and interim progress reports in ELA, math, social studies, and science. Some teachers are using an online app that enables them to communicate with parents about daily activities and to give homework and due date reminders. Parents said that they are offered workshops to help them learn about the benefits of the school’s program that will help their children better learn the English language. During the parent meeting, most parents also said that the school has provided them with support to learn English and to attend classes to get their General Equivalency Diplomas. Parents remarked that since a few of the teachers speak Spanish it is easier for parents to maintain in contact with the school and be an active part in helping their children attain their goals. Parents also commented on how children who came to this country neither speaking nor writing in English are now able to read, speak, and write much better in English because of the school’s efforts.

- The principal expects teachers to plan activities that activate student’s prior knowledge and bridge the gap with real-world problems. As a result, teachers try to embed multiple scaffolds and resources such as experience and anchor charts into daily lesson plans to increase student engagement. School leaders hold teachers accountable by conducting learning walks and by providing them feedback to note adherence to stated expectations, such as how well the lessons they are teaching are aligned to learning objectives. Teachers also help contribute to their own professional learning. Teachers indicated that they received tools and support from the data specialist to learn how to unpack data and look closely at the alignment of assessment results and the learning tasks being presented in class.