Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 371 - Lillian L. Rashkis
High school 75K371
355 37th St.
Brooklyn
NY 11232

Principal: Joan Antonelli

Dates of Review:
May 24, 2017 - May 25, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop
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

### 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>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 Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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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>
<td>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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Findings**

Goal-setting and effective action planning at the school level, including professional development planning, are informed by a comprehensive, data-driven needs assessment and ongoing data gathering and analysis. School leaders effectively involve and communicate with the school community, including teachers, families, and age-appropriate students.

**Impact**

Improved teacher practice across classrooms is closing the achievement gap. The school community is implementing improvement plans and decision-making processes.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School goals were created with accompanying action plans, mid-year benchmark checkpoints, and progress tracking toward each goal. One of the school goals was created based on monthly administrators' reviews of Advance data and two of the areas of improvement included designing coherent instruction and using assessment during instruction. By the end of the school year, 75 percent of teachers are expected to improve their practice through the use of specially designed instruction as evidenced by a five percent increase in the number of students accumulating required credits toward graduation. At the time of the review, students had met and exceeded the credit accumulation across English Language Arts (ELA), social studies, math, and science content areas. Sixty-one percent of teachers have improved in their ratings, receiving effective or above, to date, based on the school's progress monitoring. School administrators and teachers connect the growth in teacher and student performance to an expectation of increased rigor during instruction and in curriculum planning.

- A goal centered on increasing opportunities for parents by providing monthly informational sessions via in-person and remote access through the school portal has produced, as of February 2017, parent workshops tailored to families' and students' specific needs. An example is Front Door training, which promotes how students with disabilities can enjoy more meaningful relationships with family, friends and others in their lives and fully participate in their communities and live in the home of their choice. The school received an 82 percent satisfaction rating from parents on the School Survey during the 2015-2016 school year and is expecting to meet an 85 percent satisfaction rating as measured on the 2016-2017 school year survey.

- Teachers have been charged with refining units of study and instructional guides to include specially designed instruction to improve upon the curricula already in place as evidenced by a five percent overall increase in academic achievement on New York State Alternate Assessments (NYSAA) and Regents exams. Based on January 2017 Regents results, ELA Common Core passing rates increased by 33 percent and Algebra Common Core passing rates increased by 28 percent.

- School goals and how they will be measured throughout the year are communicated to the school community at the beginning of the school year and follow-up communication is shared with staff and families via workshops and newsletters. Student council members report being included in conversations with the principal regarding school improvement efforts and these efforts are included and communicated in their newspaper.
### Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are not consistently aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

**Impact**

Limited feedback is provided to students and teachers regarding student achievement. Teachers inconsistently make effective adjustments to meet students' learning needs.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Rubrics and checklists are created in teacher team meetings that are aligned to EngageNY and NYSAA daily skills assessments and there are efforts to develop rubrics that are appropriate to students’ varying academic levels. Feedback is expected to be on students work specific to the skills being measured, in addition to verbal and symbol feedback. A review of student work showed inconsistencies in the depth of feedback provided that did not communicate clear and actionable next steps for students to improve. A student scoring four out of six possible points on a World War I Treaty of Versailles assignment received feedback stating, “You had a lot to say during the discussion.” Next steps included, “Complete all answers and use complete sentences.” An ELA student task on figurative language assessing definition and the ability to provide examples for simile, metaphor, idiom, personification, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia received a grade of check plus with feedback stating, “Thanks for focusing this period.”

- A nutrient poster project assessing students on their ability to research components of their assigned nutrient, for example, vitamins A and C, and carbohydrates using visual images and written responses to support their claims of nutritional benefits included a rubric with feedback that was aligned along with clear next steps. Categories being assessed were graphics and originality, required elements, content accuracy, grammar, and labels with students being graded on a scale of one to four; with four being the highest score.

- During an ELA lesson, students did not have a clear understanding of similes and metaphors. The teacher attempted to ask questions to clear up misunderstandings such as, “What does it mean to be as cold as a winter breeze?”, and “Remember when we reviewed the lyrics of the song to express the rapper’s struggles?” Students still did not have a clear grasp of similes and metaphors as evidenced by their work and discussion. When the teacher asked “Do you guys have any questions about similes or metaphors?” none of the students responded and the teacher proceeded with the lesson.

- During an algebra lesson on solving complex equations and expressions, the teacher assisted students as she walked throughout the classroom and supported students with working through their misconceptions. A student working at the front of the room solving an algebraic equation multiplying two binomials was able to self-assess her work and realized she needed additional support and asked the teacher to help her work through the problem and together they were able to solve the problem.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<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 the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

The faculty makes purposeful decisions to build coherence and promote college and career readiness for all students. Curricula is accessible for a variety of learners, however, demonstration of student learning is not yet coherent across grades and content areas.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s student population consists of a community of young people who are assessed by NYSAA and Regents exams. Curricula reflects the diverse learners within the different school sites and one of the core curricula implemented this year for students who take standardized assessments is the Writing Revolution, which encompasses specific writing strategies across content areas. Teachers use this curriculum to support students with sentence strategies to build complexity and clarity, and outlines to develop well-structured summaries, paragraphs, and argumentative essays.

- Teachers of students who are alternately assessed focus their planning and curricula on the use of functional vocabulary for daily living skills, use of money, measurement and time, and student behavioral and social-emotional needs. Curricula are also centered on embedding real-world experiences and inclusion of the Career Development Occupational Standards (CDOS) across the curriculum. Teacher unit and lesson plans included evidence of tiered tasks and groupings, vocabulary, assessments, and specially designed instruction notes. However, evidence of students’ demonstration of their thinking was not included in all plans. An ELA lesson on brainstorming and planning for fiction writing included explicit details on how students, some of whom are non-verbal, would respond to the task. Some responses included nodding their heads, turning towards or away from the item or pointing to a yes or no card, leading to students engaging in highlighting vocabulary with assistance and cutting and pasting of an image that represents their topic and writing with support. A different ELA plan noted the lesson’s objective, supplemental materials, and differentiation, but there was no evidence of how students were expected to demonstrate their understanding of the lesson.

- School leaders and teachers have increased the rigor in the planning of tasks by working with the Individualized Education Program (IEP) committee to ensure alignment with students’ present levels of performance and their skills-based goals that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, instructional shifts, and CDOS. The use of Google Drive has positively impacted curriculum development so that teachers are now sharing planning information with each other, culminating in curricula that are accessible to their diverse learners.
Additional Finding

<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, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Teaching strategies, including questioning and scaffolds, consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Although students are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstrate higher-order thinking skills in student work products, high quality supports and extensions into the curricula are not apparent across the vast majority of classes. Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best, however this belief is not yet coherent across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers believe students learn best when provided with explicit instructions with multiple opportunities for practice and when the learning environment is customized and personalized to meet their individual needs. Additionally, faculty emphasizes the importance that students are provided with choices and opportunities that build upon their strengths. During a Living Environment lab lesson on the influence of natural selection on evolution, students engaged in a hands-on activity using tweezers, clothespins, and birdseeds to investigate how the beaks of certain finches, small birds found in locations throughout the world, adapted through natural selection. All students were engaged in the lab activity using the different tools that served as finch beaks and the seeds represented finch food on a particular island. Students then noted their findings on a summary sheet that included questions such as, “What characteristics of your beak interfered with feeding success on the original island?”, “Why did some beak types survive on the new island with large seeds when they could not survive on the original island?”

- In an ELA class with students who are alternately assessed, the lesson’s objective charged learners with creating a fictional story by starting with brainstorming, then planning, and choosing a fictional topic. Students were provided with a tip sheet and a selection of fictional topics that they had the option to select from either independently or with a partner. The teacher modeled one of their options, “Superheroes and me on a mountain at night.” Some students were provided with a brainstorming graphic organizer, a worksheet with visuals, or story cards.

- A health and nutrition class’s aim was, “How does prolonged consumption of fast food affect physical health?” Students viewed the documentary Supersize Me by Morgan Spurlock and worked collaboratively in pairs or triads to discuss questions related to the film using a think-pair-share graphic organizer followed by a writing activity using a Writing Revolution worksheet.
### Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. Faculty consistently communicates expectations to students that are connected to a path to college and career readiness.

### Impact

Training is provided to the staff and there is a system of accountability to meet the expectations, however, the faculty is working to improve in an effort to have a system of mutual accountability. Ongoing feedback is provided to help families understand student progress toward meeting post-secondary expectations.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate with faculty regularly via email, the staff handbook, and a weekly memo, entitled Principals Weekly. A weekly memo sent to staff at the start of the spring semester reminded the staff to set the tone for students and to review class expectations, assignments, and exams. “Clear expectations and collaborative effort among all demonstrates positive outcomes for our students. Follow the structures that we have established and build upon them. We have had an extremely successful year thus far…we must continue to work hard and sustain our best practices” was noted in the January 30, 2017 communication.

- Professional learning has focused on writing across content areas, development of IEP goals, and looking at assessment data to inform curricular planning. The School Leadership Team (SLT) realized that students were not performing well on the short response and essay portions of the Regents exams across content areas and wanted to empower faculty to support students to become better writers. Teachers and leadership participated in an intervisitation with another District 75 school to see and learn about best practices associated with their improved student academic performance that was attributed to The Writing Revolution. Teachers have reported seeing improvements in their students’ writing because they are receiving professional development on how to teach struggling writers.

- Parents state that the school communicates with them regularly. Parents appreciate the different methods used, such as phone calls, texting, the on-line platform PupilPath, and the parent/teacher notebook, which is sent home daily with some students. One mother commented, “I get updates all the time. Most of the time when I call the school and leave a message, my call is returned within 20 minutes.” A parent of a student who is non-verbal stated, “I like that teachers write comments on the report card. I find that information more helpful than seeing the actual grade because my son can’t tell me what’s happening in his classes.”

- Parents of students who are either alternately assessed or take Regents exams agree that the school is working hard to prepare their children to be successful. “Whether the student is verbal or non-verbal, the school makes sure students are exposed to work site experiences and internships”, stated a father. The parent coordinator was commended for her efforts of ensuring that all families are educated on how to best support their children by providing workshops and bringing in agencies to discuss topics such as transition services, guardianship, and community integration.
**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 Learning Standards. Teacher teams consistently analyze assessment data and student work for students they share.

**Impact**

The instructional capacity of teachers is strengthening. Improved teacher practice typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teacher teams meet weekly in small inquiry-based groups, focusing on both alternate and standardized assessed students, functional skills, transition, and pupil personnel teams. The functional skills team includes classroom and speech teachers who support students who require extensive modification of instruction and materials in order to access the curriculum. The objective of this team is to develop resources that will support students’ abilities to engage in all content areas with a focus on reading, writing, speaking, listening, and math. Consequently, as noted in the school’s most recent School Quality Snapshot, movement of students to less restrictive environments and integration into general education schools were rated ‘good’ and ‘excellent’, respectively.

- During a teacher team meeting to discuss student work based on ELA Regents exam prompts, teachers used the Regents rubric to evaluate work products and noticed improvements in students’ use of appropriate grammar and use of evidence from the text to support their examples of irony. Teachers added that the students showing the most improvement on their work had taken advantage of completing multiple drafts and the organization of their essays was evidence of their effort. An overall increase in ELA Regents passing scores from January 2016 (38 percent) to January 2017 (71 percent) resulted in a 33 percentage point increase.

- Teachers report that the increased professional development support and collaboration in their teacher team meetings have positively impacted the instructional rigor happening in classrooms. “The triad team meetings which were in place last year have been fine-tuned this year and there is a lot more structure, especially in Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) techniques, which allows us to address behaviors early on and focus on instruction”, commented a teacher. Seventy-eight percent of the staff have been trained in TCI and the SLT’s goal is to have all staff trained by the 2017-2018 school year.