Quality Review Report

2016-2017

School of Math, Science, and Healthy Living

Elementary 20K971

6214 4th Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11220

Principal: Ruth Stanislus

Dates of Review:
February 2, 2017 - February 3, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

School of Math, Science, and Healthy Living serves students in grade K through grade 5. 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>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</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 Celebration</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 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>
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<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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</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>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>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</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>
</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>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

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

Findings

Teaching strategies, such as differentiated tasks, scaffolds, and supports, provide multiple entry points into the curricula. High levels of student thinking and participation culminate in meaningful student work products.

Impact

All learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities, are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks, leading to student work products and discussions that demonstrate high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, teaching strategies, such as teacher questioning, differentiated tasks, graphic organizers, manipulatives, use of native language in the classroom, and access to the thinking of a partner and the group, abound. Teachers consistently asked questions at varying levels of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK), usually in differentiated tasks for groups of students. For example, in a fifth grade writing class, the teacher’s questioning began with simply asking students to recall the details of a story, but quickly advanced to asking students to determine the author’s purpose and how it affects the reader’s interpretation of events. After some partnered exploration of the text, the teacher asked students to create their own thesis statements with access to peers, character trait charts, drafting paper from some students, and differentiated graphic organizers. The classroom discussions that ensued in a variety of home languages as students worked together to dig into modeled text with increasing rigor and ample supports was typical of other classrooms visited.

- Similarly, in a second grade math class, students were asked to solve a real-world math problem about the principal of the school shopping for fruit for the school’s culture month party. Students were given differentiated addition doubles to solve in partnerships. Students were asked to use numbers, pictures and words to show their work and explain their mathematical thinking and were also able to self-select manipulatives and number charts to aide them in problem solving. Through this partnered work, with differentiated numbers, various writing scaffolds, and access to manipulatives, students work products and discussions reflected high levels of student thinking and participation.

- Across classrooms, teacher- and student-created anchor charts and accountable talk scaffolds supported students in engaging in meaningful classroom discussions. In a lower grade reading lesson on scooping words in non-fiction reading, students were supported by clear teacher and paraprofessional modelling before beginning independent and partnered practice. A teacher-made anchor chart made the expectations of what smooth reading looks and sounds like clear and a chart that the teacher created with the students displayed student reasons why smooth reading is important, such as, “If our reading is bumpy, people won’t understand.” Several student pairs were observed utilizing the anchor charts as they worked with their partner, and all students were engaged in trying out the non-fiction reading strategy.
Findings

Teachers’ assessment and grading practices are strong in English Language Arts (ELA), but provide limited actionable feedback to students and teachers in other content areas. While conferencing practices are developing across classrooms, teachers are inconsistent in making on-the-spot adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Impact

Students receive limited actionable feedback. Ongoing checks for understanding across classrooms were inconsistently used to make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms and student work samples there are uneven levels of actionable feedback to students. In ELA, especially in writing tasks, students consistently use rubrics in instruction and receive feedback in the form of a rubric, with attached glows and grows from their peers and teacher that offer clear insight into successes and clear next steps. As an example, a grow given to a fifth grader on an on-demand literary essay stated, “I think your writing would be better if you express your opinion and relate to the writer. For the next piece, write about two texts and how they connect in themes.” While this practice is growing in math and other subjects, the use of rubrics and teacher and peer feedback is inconsistent, limiting the feedback to students and teachers.

- In seven of the nine classes visited, teachers were observed conferencing with students, often taking notes on student thinking. In a math class, the teacher collected notes about the mathematical language that students used, noting, “the numbers are sometimes big and sometimes small,” or, “all have 10.” While the teacher collected this student thinking, no changes to instruction were observed. In other classes, students completed their task and waited for the teacher to give them further instruction or a new task. In another lesson, the teacher asked students to check in with one another about their thinking, but it was unclear about what the teacher knew. Together, these examples note an inconsistent use of ongoing checks for understanding being used to make effective adjustments to meet student learning needs.

- Twice in writing classes, clear on-the-spot adjustment were made for learners from conferencing. In one, the teacher’s conferencing note-taking organizer detailed the date, her compliment to the student and the student’s next step in writing, indicating a possible upcoming adjustment to instruction. In another writing class, students were given an essay to-do list that made next steps very clear for students, such as “set up a place to gather evidence for reason three (notebook, booklet or draft),” “list mini reasons that match my reason,” “put my evidence in order,” and “rehearse with a partner.” This clarity of task in the checklist provided students with clear guidance on next steps, though the ability to self-assess and ownership of their learning that was not observed across the majority of classrooms.
Findings

The school leaders and faculty are in the process of aligning the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks are inconsistently planned to provide high levels of rigor and access for all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Impact

Lack of alignment and of a consistent focus on rigor results in uneven levels of student access to curricula that promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is in the process of aligning the curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. The school's ELA curricula are made up of Mondo, Teachers College (TC) reading units in some grades, with TC writing units in all grades, which are aligned to the Common Core. While ensuring that students acquire strong academic vocabulary across the content areas and deep contextual understanding in math are concepts that are frequently a focus in instruction, the focus is not articulated in the school's curricula. A review of the school's curricula demonstrates that some reading units, like a fourth grade unit titled “Unselfish Acts” that lasts from September to November, highlight no academic vocabulary to be taught. Similarly, the school's self-made science curricula do not outline key vocabulary or lessons, and is merely an outline of topics to be covered for each grade.

- For math, the school utilizes Terc Investigations and is beginning to incorporate some Math in the City investigations to deepen student understanding through discussion and productive struggle. While teachers certainly articulated this move toward the instructional shifts, they are not explicit in the school's curricular maps. A kindergarten math unit, as others, does not highlight any focus on deep contextual understanding, nor does it demonstrate any planning for rigor beyond the inclusion of some essential questions. This is also common in the other curricula observed and as the template used by teachers to plan asks for essential questions, skills and strategies, teaching points, materials and standards, but does not have a place to record planning to ensure appropriate challenge for students with disabilities and ELLs. The kindergarten unit noted above does show reflection that the unit was unnecessarily long, but does not demonstrate refinement using student work or data.

- Teacher lesson plans and classroom instructional practices demonstrate planning for rigor using leveled DOK questions as mentioned earlier, but this planning and refinement of the curricula does not make its way back into the curricula, most of which is housed in a Google Drive. It is clear from common planning observed that teachers are refining the curricula and sharing strategies and additional resources to supplement curricula and promote stronger student work products in different grades. As these are currently individual teacher practices, they do not yet demonstrate coherence across curricula in promoting college and career readiness for all students.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and staff create a culture for learning with high expectations for staff. Expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness are consistently communicated to families.

Impact

School and teacher leaders consistently provide training and have a system of accountability for staff. In addition, all students learn in a community where feedback and guidance to families is clear.

Supporting Evidence

- School and teacher leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff, beginning with a two-day September staff retreat where expectations and non-negotiables, like small group instruction and teacher conferencing are set. Communication continues throughout the year in professional learning sessions and coaching cycles. The school also has a charter that is used throughout the school, in adult and student work, to set expectations for professionalism that include norms for teamwork and collaboration, being respectful, handling disagreements and positive, proactive thinking. Through weekly professional learning, weekly notes, an open door policy, and classroom observations, the principal and assistant principal facilitate an open, supportive environment and system of accountability. Meeting records from several schoolwide data check-ins show teachers working together to review class data and norm noticings across grades and subject areas, allowing administrators to note commonalities across teams.

- Through the implementation of coaching cycles and professional learning connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the school leaders support and provide training for expectations for teaching and learning. The school’s United Federation of Teachers representative serves as a math coach and a reading recovery teacher serves as a reading coach. Alongside the principal and assistant principal, these teacher leaders provide ongoing support and training for teachers that helps to deepen their understanding of expectations and supports their lesson planning and assessment practices. Other professional learning in the school sets clear expectations for inquiry work, common planning, assessment practices and teaching practices that are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, such as student engagement and managing classroom behavior.

- Parents expressed that there is clear communication from teachers and praised the school’s open door policy, workshops, and events that help families to understand student progress toward expectations connected to college and career readiness. Parents expressed that they have easy and daily communication with teachers and school leaders, such as during pick up and through notes, calls, and emails with teachers. Parents are particularly pleased with the school's monthly learning together workshops where parents are invited to the classroom to learn alongside their children. This practice in particular helps parents understand academic expectations.

- The school also has an annual stepping up week that is well-attended, where parents get to meet with the teachers of the next grade each May. Teachers preview the curricula, expectations, events and milestones of the grade and help to ease the transition, especially for children moving up from the lower grades. There are also middle school workshops for parents to learn about middle school options, fairs and school tours. Parents also reported that the school works with them to complete the school applications and helps to prepare students who are applying to specialized middle schools like Mark Twain. Parents and students also reported that students get an opportunity to explore future careers and create vision boards and presentations about the kind of life and career they want to have in the future.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Feedback to teachers accurately captures strengths, challenges and next steps that are connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and articulates clear expectations for teacher practice. Teacher observation data is used effectively to design and create professional development.

Impact

Teacher support and supervision elevates schoolwide instructional practices and implementation of strategies across the school that promote professional growth and reflection. Teachers receive tailored professional learning opportunities and support that is aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Supporting Evidence

- Feedback to teachers captures strengths, challenges and communicates clear expectations for pedagogy. Teachers describe feedback as accurate in capturing what is observed in the lesson, and detailed in the glows and grows. Several teachers also noted that their feedback is always prompt, allowing them to make changes to their instruction quickly, sometimes through email with an invitation to meet but more often it happens in person. Teacher observation records show that teachers are given clear commendations, suggestions, questions to consider and clear next steps. For example, one observation by the principal notes clear engagement of students through the use of hands on materials and provision of student choice as commendations, and suggestions and next steps connected to formalizing formative assessment practices and record keeping. This feedback is clearly aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the schoolwide focus on engaging classrooms and formative assessment practices.

- A review of the school’s professional learning plan for the school year shows a connection to the school’s lowest rated Danielson components from the previous year, questioning and discussion and using assessment in instruction. Professional learning topics focus on progress monitoring in instruction, student questioning and conversations and planning for small group instruction. The assistant principal also noted that if there is an area of focus for several teachers, she will create a professional learning series for just those teachers, as was the case this year for a group of teachers that needed additional support in conducting and interpreting the use of Fountas and Pinnel leveled reading assessments.

- Teachers also reported that having time set aside for both inquiry work and common planning has been valuable in supporting their development, as it provides teachers with time to share best practices, strategies and modifications that they make for their students. Coaching cycles also help to create ongoing professional learning and mentoring to support teachers that are new to the profession or are untenured and provides opportunities for teacher leaders to develop their craft.
Additional Finding

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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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</table>

Findings

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

Impact

Teacher collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Inquiry work typically results in progress toward goals for groups of students, particularly in writing.

Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional learning on teams that meet weekly. Teachers select their own focus, but each cycle centers around the school’s instructional focus of writing in math. Teachers analyze student work and the Common Core standards and select strategies to implement to meet student need from the online inquiry program, Goalbook. The inquiry teams focus in on individual students and rely on data, student work samples, and research-based strategies to implement to strengthen teacher instructional practices and progress for groups of students in cycles. For example, one inquiry team chose students with a common deficiency of letter formation. Teachers targeted specific students and applied strategies from Goalbook, to build up skills in a six-week cycle. Teachers began to see improvement in the clarity of student writing, by giving them daily tasks for each week of the cycle, such as cutting with scissors and highlighting between the writing grids. Through focused review of student work and shared application of strategies, students demonstrated improvement in writing.

- Teachers on a second grade inquiry team examine student work from a teacher-created word problem solving strategy template in Goalbook, silently passing around the student work and putting observations on a sticky note. Teachers noted things about the student work such as “She knows the strategy but not the steps” and “She is able to identify that she needs the number line to help her.” From there, teachers discuss strategies for support, leveraging the expertise in the group, which includes general and special educators, English as a New Language (ENL) and reading recovery teachers. The teachers then decide to change the graphic organizer that they have been using a bit so that it encourages students to discuss their strategy before writing about it, and discuss providing students with different paper choices that allow for students to express more complex ideas. This team practice demonstrates a clear inquiry approach, where teachers are focused on a specific skill and group of students over time that allows them to measure progress toward their school goal.

- Teachers noted that their focus had previously been in ELA on sentence structure and then adding detail. Through this work, they created the writing checklists mentioned earlier that are spreading across the grades. Teacher also described another inquiry cycle focused on academic vocabulary, where they gave students individualized word walls and synonyms that resulted in progress in student writing and in making connections across the content areas.