Quality Review Report
2016-2017

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Elementary 06M132
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Manhattan
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Principal: Xiomara Nova
Dates of Review:
March 16, 2017 - March 17, 2017
Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepcion
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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>Developing</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>
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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>
</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>Area of Celebration</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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings
School leaders support the development of teachers, including those new to the profession, with cycles of feedback provided by each school administrator. Feedback accurately captures their strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*.

Impact
Frequent cycles of observations articulate clear expectations for instruction and professionalism aligned to the school instructional focus.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct four cycles of observations to support teachers. They read and discuss each observation and rotate teachers during each cycle of observation so that teachers receive feedback from each administrator. To ensure implementation of previous next steps, each observation references the previous administrators’ recommendations. In one observation, the school leader states, “It was a pleasure to see the improvements that you’ve made in creating a respectful and positive classroom environment for all your students which is an area that you have been working on and identified as an area of growth from a previous observation.” Observations include the analysis of student work. Feedback in a report focused on the quality of the task noted that it “required only minimal thinking by students and allowed limited opportunity for them to explain their thinking, allowing most students to be passive or merely compliant.” This targeted feedback provides a reference point for specific next steps.

- Observations articulate expectations which have been discussed and agreed upon. Recommendations such as, “Ensure that what is written in the plan is executed. Have suitable materials available for all students such as math boards. Plan/ask diagnostic questions to assess the extent of student understanding” underscore the specific practices that teachers should employ. A two-week period is given for practices to be implemented before the school leader monitors the actual practice. Similarly, in another observation, the school leader provides the teacher with direct practices to utilize and suggests the use of accountable talk stems along with a defined implementation time.

- Feedback to teachers captures teacher’s strengths, challenges, and next steps to support improved teacher practice. For example, a teacher received a rating of developing in the area of questioning and discussion technique. The questions were described as being determined in advance and providing only a single path of thought. The recommendation included the steps necessary to achieve an effective rating and suggested that questions be developed using the Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* protocol. An attachment provides the name of a colleague who can be visited as a source of support as well. In all observations reviewed, this pattern of specific, actionable next steps was in evidence.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and a set of beliefs about student conversation development.

Impact
Student engagement and participation is uneven with students inconsistently demonstrating higher-order thinking in both their work products and classroom discussion.

Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders and staff believe that modeling and providing concrete examples of expected outcomes is how children learn best. Due to the needs of the large English Language Learner population, there is a focus on oral language development and discussion. Across classrooms, there was an attempt to use turn and talk to increase student conversation. In many classrooms, speech teachers supported students who needed more assistance. However, there were limited discussion opportunities and evidence of attention to oral language development in the classes visited. In one math class, the teacher used an interactive white board to project the definition of a word listed in the curriculum’s “e glossary.” The teacher read the word, its definition, and proceeded to teach the lesson without expanding the idea or connecting the vocabulary to the lesson.

- In math classes observed, many students struggled to understand how to create equivalent fractions. In one self-contained special education class, the teacher used an image projector to review fractions and even called on one student with the correct answer to demonstrate his work. However, concrete supports to assist students with the concepts were not provided, limiting their ability to demonstrate higher-order thinking. In another math class, students had counters but they proved to be insufficient to help the students understand the relationship between sets of fractions. One group of students decided they would change the numbers so as not to have to work with fractions. Another student pushed the counters aside explaining the counters were not helpful. Yet, in another math class, a teacher had students standing in place value order to reflect the numbers in the math problems. This strategy led to students’ understanding and demonstrating their thinking.

- Student conversations across classrooms focused largely on asking for clarifications, repeating procedural information and each other’s ideas. While students in some classes used accountable talk stems such as I agree, little conversation took place. In a grade four science class, conversation was superficial. When asked the importance of electricity in our lives, many students responded that the world would be dark without this form of energy. In a grade two dual language literacy class, students merely repeated each other’s reasons regarding the action of the character in the story.
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 have selected curricula that are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts with rigorous academic tasks.

Impact

Lesson plans require students to engage in tasks that address the instructional shifts. School leaders have strengthened their math curricula through the use of a program that promotes modeling in mathematical thinking which leads to improved conceptual understanding and mathematical reasoning.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders made a purposeful decision to blend two of the New York City recommended literacy programs. For reading, school leaders have selected a program that uses complex texts and requires students to engage in close reading, annotated text based vocabulary, and both fiction and non-fiction texts. Students answer text dependent questions for comprehension. As this reading program only produced short response writing, school leaders selected a university-based program that provides specific learning in opinion and argument writing to ensure career and college readiness. Together, the blended programs expose students to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. In a grade two unit, for example, students use close reading skills and determine the author’s point of view while reading *The Early Hudson Years*. The performance task requires students to provide evidence from the text and use academic vocabulary related to early American exploration to write an argumentative essay establishing and supporting a position.

- Students engage in content curriculum that is rigorous. In a grade five science unit, students study simple machines, explore the observable effects of gravity, and understand the relationship between force and motion. Students describe the effects of common forces and are expected to use the principles they learn to examine designs of engineering and identify how simple machines are used in engineering and prototyping. In a grade three social studies unit, students use maps to learn about China’s geography, and the trade route along the Silk Road to understand cultural exchanges. This unit culminates in a task requiring students to write a research paper on China’s politics and cultural customs. These units include picture supports, vocabulary, and organizers to ensure access for all students.

- School leaders adopted a New York City recommended program that focuses on the math standards and mathematical practices. Additionally, the curriculum includes a technology portion that is used as both a reteach and enrichment portal to differentiate for all students. However, given the large population of English Language Learners at the school, school leaders wanted to have a math curriculum that focused on modeling so they adopted an additional program that emphasizes this practice. Modeling math solutions was included in planning documents across the grades.
Additional Finding

**Quality Indicator:** 2.2 Assessments  
**Rating:** Developing

**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics that are loosely aligned with the school’s curricula. Teacher assessment practices are developing in the use of common assessments to measure student progress.

**Impact**

As a result of uneven practices, students receive limited feedback. Common assessment results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instructional practices, thus limiting student progress toward their goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- While the school uses the English Language Arts (ELA) checklist aligned with the curriculum, the practice of using task specific rubrics was not observed in other subjects. Most feedback on ELA tasks focuses on spelling, capitalizations, and punctuations. Additionally, feedback is conversational in nature and does not provide actionable next steps. In a student meeting, students had their portfolios but were unable to explain how they would use their feedback as a next step. Rubrics are provided to students at the end of the task as a grading tool, thus limiting student understanding of what is required to achieve proficiency.

- The school uses an online common assessment as well as running records in ELA. While school leaders provided the charts and graphs from the online assessments, they were unaware of the results. All teachers are expected to develop instructional intervention plans as an outcome of analyzing the data. In a teacher meeting, teachers stated that they analyze common assessment data and use it to plan differentiated groups. However, they could not provide an example of groups formed in this manner. When students were asked about conferencing and common assessments, students confirmed conferences, but they were unable to articulate what information had been shared during conferencing or the next steps they should employ to reach their goal. Students stated they had logged-in information for the online program and had taken the online performance exam but did not know how that information was being used.

- Checks for understanding were observed in only four classrooms and consisted of thumbs up or down, or an agreement by one student and a confirmation from another. In core content classes like mathematics, checks for understanding were not in evidence. Thus, the necessary adjustments needed to ensure all students learned the intended content did not take place. In one grade five math class, the teacher asked a question about the reasonableness of an answer and the students volunteered seven answers, which the teacher rejected. Despite these rejections and clear misunderstandings, a mid-lesson adjustment did not occur. In another math class, it became apparent that half the class struggled with a word problem. The teacher went from table to table and spoke to the students but never clarified the steps to the solution. In many classrooms, teachers continued teaching despite the fact that student work products demonstrated misconceptions.
## Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator:

| 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Proficient |

## Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations for instruction to the entire staff and communicate expectations connected to college and career readiness to parents through the school newsletter.

## Impact

A system of accountability for those expectations exists across the school community. Ongoing effective communication to parents provides clear understanding of student progress towards achievement of their goals.

## Supporting Evidence

- A review of the school leader’s emails, memorandums, and the school newsletter, *Qué Pasa?* reveals the high expectations for instruction and professionalism. In one newsletter, teachers were reminded to ensure that their feedback was rubric based to promote students “reaching a higher level of performance.” In addition, students were to write a reflection on their feedback. In another memo, teachers were asked to collect additional writing pieces and math tasks entering the data into the school online account. A review of the school professional development plan indicates that teachers are provided with training to support school expectations. Observations confirm the accountability each teacher has for these expectations and feedback often highlights implementation of the strategies presented during professional development sessions.

- Parents shared they receive classroom letters from the teachers that provide information on the curricula topics for the month. In addition to this, parents cited the school newsletter as a source of information for keeping them up to date as to school events. Parents explained that in addition to the report cards, there is an online grading program that provides them with real-time information on student progress. Parents referred to progress reports, emails, and phone calls they receive and the use of Tuesday parent engagement time to schedule follow up meetings with teachers.

- Parents explained they are familiar with several online resources that support the curricula. They look at these resources to gauge what students are learning. They are still struggling to completely understand Common Core math, but feel family literacy and math nights have provided them with support in understanding the work their children are required to learn. Additionally, parents underscored they are able to check in on student progress using the school online data system. Parents use this information to schedule follow-up appointments which often lead to enrolling their student in the school’s intervention program. Several of the parents credited this program with providing their students with targeted supports that increased their student’s reading level.
### Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development | Rating: | Developing |

**Findings**

Teachers across the school are engaged in structured professional collaborations that include peer coaching cycles. Distributive leadership is developing through the use of lead teachers.

**Impact**

Teacher teamwork involves looking at student work, but lacks an inquiry approach. While the school is developing distributive leadership through a cadre of master and lead teachers, these structures are not yet in place preventing all teachers from having a key voice in decisions that impact student achievement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Using an agreed upon protocol, teachers reviewed student work products from a colleague’s class. The work of two general education students in an Integrated Co-teaching class was analyzed. Student work from other team members was not analyzed, hindering the identification of trends in student performance across classes. While one teacher decided to create a tool for collecting evidence, another teacher spoke about conferencing with her students. Conversations regarding strategies they all might employ did not occur. An inquiry approach was not in evidence limiting improving coherence and consistency across classrooms.

- Minutes of other team meetings revealed a focus on discussion, but not implementation, of strategies to improve practice. Improvement in teacher practice as a primary outcome of the meeting was not apparent although minutes reflect teachers' wanting to improve their practice and engage in intervisitations. In some meetings, teachers look at work products or analyze data yet reference to next steps is not incorporated in these discussions.

- The school has a peer collaborating teacher who leads workshops and professional learning sessions for teacher leaders across the grades. The focus of this work is to provide mentoring for new teachers and coaching for all other teachers. Teachers in leadership roles met and worked on developing a checklist for teachers to use to rate student conversation, which is a school goal. In a team meeting, when asked about distributive leadership roles, teachers were unable to speak about their role in influencing decisions that affect student learning. In a conversation with school administrators, they shared they have surveyed teachers and are looking to strengthen teacher leadership development so that all teachers’ voices would be heard. Awareness of the importance of distributive leadership is present. However, structures for this to be realized are not yet in place.