Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 200- The James Mccune Smith School

Elementary 05M200

2589 7th Ave.
Manhattan
NY 10039

Principal: Renee Belton

Dates of Review:
January 26, 2017 - January 27, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
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>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>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>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>
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</tbody>
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### School Culture

<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>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
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<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>
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<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>Developing</td>
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<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator | 1.4 Positive Learning Environment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders, guidance counselors, students and parents work collaboratively to create an inclusive culture that is conducive to student and adult learning. Student voice is welcome and encouraged and structures are in place so that students are well known and get guidance and support.

Impact

Guidance, peer mediation, student government, and a focus on character development result in a nurturing and safe learning environment. Guidance, mentoring and support for students and families align with student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s approach to culture building, discipline, and social-emotional support is focused around what it means to be respectful and well behaved. Each month, the school focuses on a character trait through the Cloud Nine character development curricula. Teachers and staff across the school focus on getting students (and adults) to recognize the character strengths in themselves and in others. Discussions in the classrooms focus on traits, such as integrity, and this continues to other settings like lunch and recess. Several students stated that they have classroom jobs and can also assist with duties in the lunchroom, where they get opportunities to demonstrate their learned character traits.

- Students, teachers, and parents alike reported that the school is a safe place for all. There is a respectful tone between teachers, students and staff. Students are known well and feel that they have an adult, or many, that they can trust. Students and staff alike know these trusted advisors in the school as a “go to person.” Students reported that they could meet with their “go to person” whenever they needed to, whether to get something off of their chest or offer them guidance about building friendships, something the students reported that the school does well. Teachers also articulated that they work together as a team and often provide one another with support.

- Student voice is welcomed and valued in the school as demonstrated by the student government, which is comprised of twenty-five students from grades four and five, who are supported by the school’s literacy coach and a fifth grade teacher. The student government provides a platform for students to voice issues about school lunch, recess and other topics of importance to the students. There is also peer mediation at the school, led by the school’s guidance counselors, who teach students mediation and conflict resolution skills, which allows them to have a voice in school culture building and discipline.

- The school leaders, counselors, parent coordinator and partners, such as the Harlem YMCA, provide guidance and support for students and families who need it, particularly with attendance. The Y has created a game room in the school where purposefully selected students can play and receive guidance from counselors and a social worker. Twice a week, high school students from Frederick Douglass Academy visit to mentor thirty-five Black fifth grade boys, providing guidance and homework help in alignment with student learning needs.
Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations. Teacher teams analyze student work and data for students they share.

Impact
While teacher teams meet regularly and follow an agenda that is loosely tied to the school’s goals, the lack of a formal inquiry approach limits their ability to improve teacher practice. Analysis of student work and assessment data does not typically result in progress toward goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- While the work of the fifth grade team shows evidence that teachers are engaged in professional collaboration, this collaboration is not structured inquiry. In an observation of the team, teachers followed an agenda and discussed rubric development in support of student writing. Teachers looked at a few pieces of student work, comparing it with a teacher-created rubric, and discussed the merits of the student work and the ambiguities of the rubric, before moving on to discuss student reading in the subject areas, student use of vocabulary and ordering headphones for technology-based student work. While the discussion was centered on implementation of the Common Core, the team’s work lacked any structure for monitoring progress of instructional strategies or a focus on progress for a group of students.

- Across teams, various protocols are used to look at student work, usually with a focus on strengths and wonderings about individual pieces of work. None of the team records observed demonstrated that teacher teams are working toward progress for groups of students, though one lower grade team stated that they regularly looks at high, medium and low student work samples as they share strategies and work to differentiate practices. The agendas of teacher teams demonstrate that the teams serve as common planning time for teachers, and provide opportunities for professional collaboration in lesson planning and curriculum development, rather than a sustained look at an instructional strategy or group of students.

- Analysis of assessment data happens at teacher team meetings, with a focus on teachers making sense of their own classes’ data, rather than making sense of student data across a grade or subject area. For example, teachers reported that they use data such as iReady, or Fountas and Pinnel leveled reading assessments to tier their lessons or create students groups. While this practice may support teachers in supporting students whom they individually teach, this practice creates missed opportunities for teachers to analyze data for students whom they share, or around a common problem of practice to create shared improvements.
**Additional Finding**

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula, across grades, purposefully aligns to key Common Core Learning Standards, and consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills and rigorous habits for all learners.

**Impact**

Lesson plans and academic tasks across the school consistently offer all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), the opportunity to practice higher order thinking skills and habits, primarily through Common Core aligned tasks that are tiered or differentiated for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school leaders and teachers use the Google Drive to share Common Core-aligned curricula. There is a consistent focus on the instructional shifts, such as writing from sources, academic vocabulary and deep understanding in math. While there are shared units for all grades and subjects, teachers make adjustments to improve the tasks put before all students, and make purposeful decisions that provide rigor and access for students, particularly through adjustments to the school's curricula and the addition of online supports, such as iReady, MyON Reader and the addition of EngageNY materials, particularly in math.

- As the school has renewed their focus on writing this year, across the content areas, the school leaders decided to extend the pilot of Teachers College (TC) writing curricula from one teacher per grade to the whole school. As teachers plan with the TC curricula, they are also consistently emphasizing rigor for students with disabilities and ELLs through purposeful planning of learning targets and intervention groups. For example, a fifth grade lesson plan on research-based argument essay writing was clearly aligned to the instructional shifts, with a focus on writing and vocabulary and provided high rigor for all students by providing supports, such as translation and coaching on research and note-taking to create a bibliography. Similarly, teachers across the school have adopted additional math problems so that students have more opportunities to deepen their thinking around math problem solving and have more opportunities to talk and write about math as demonstrated in a third grade math lesson plan where students were tasked with exploring the meaning of partitive division and asked to show and explain their work in writing.

- While seven of the nine lesson plans showed clear planning to ensure that students with disabilities, ELLs, and in some cases, highest and lowest-achieving students were appropriately challenged, there were a few missed opportunities to push students to demonstrate their thinking when students are asked to cite evidence from texts and to write about their thinking in lesson plans in math and other subject areas, like social studies. In a social studies lesson about the contributions of Native Americans to New York and America, students were asked to complete a low level task, collecting evidence from various texts and visuals collected by the teacher. Unlike student evidence collection and writing in the ELA class mentioned above, students were not asked to cite where they collected their evidence, or even write in complete sentences about findings, creating a missed opportunity to engage students in rigorous work. As this curriculum is new to the school, teachers are still getting to know it and make purposeful adjustments.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Teaching practices, such as the use of small student groups and questioning to promote discussion are becoming aligned to the school's beliefs about how students learn best that are aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. Teachers are inconsistently utilizing questioning and discussion routines to promote student thinking and discussion.

**Impact**

While most lessons are planned to foster student-to-student discussions and group tasks, teacher-dominated instruction, or a lack of clear instructional strategies lead to uneven levels of thinking and participation.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders identified student-to-student discussion in small groups as a part of their school's belief about how students learn best. While teachers are certainly planning for groups of students, in practice, student were sometimes merely seated together with varying levels of group work expectations. In a kindergarten class, students were seated in small groups but given independent tasks with access to their peers but no purposeful questions or tasks to drive their collaboration. In a few classes, such as a fifth grade ELA class, students were grouped together with purposeful cooperative group roles such as leader, recorder, time keeper and presenter as they selected evidence about whether or not there should be chocolate milk in school. Although a lack of modeling made the task a bit unclear, students engaged in learning and discussions together, debating sugar content and nutrition.

- Similarly, in a dual language class, as the teacher worked with half of the class in teacher-led instruction, the other half of the class engaged in group math problem solving task where they were asked to work together to choose the best way to solve a problem, demonstrate their thinking on chart paper and then present to the class. While this collaborative thinking and group work seen for half of the students in that class was also observed in a few other math classes, teacher dominated instruction or low level tasks persisted in others, demonstrating inconsistent alignment of teaching practices to school beliefs about how students learn best.

- School leaders also articulated that students learn best when they have frequent opportunities to write about what they are learning. While students are being asked to cite evidence from the text or explain their mathematical thinking, writing from the text or to explain their mathematical thinking is beginning to be present across classrooms. Teachers are working to give students an opportunity to talk in their groups about math, a meaningful step in deepening student thinking as they move toward more writing. In several math classes, there were missed opportunities at the end of the lesson for students to write about the strategies that they used or the mathematical thinking they had done during the lesson, that are not aligned with the school's beliefs about how students learn best.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings
The school is developing in their use of common assessments to determine the progress students make towards goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
While there are many common assessments administered, there is not yet consistency and alignment across the grades in how assessment data is used to adjust curricula and instruction. Ongoing checks for understanding across classrooms are inconsistently used to make effective, adjustments to meet student learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The school is using many common assessment measures, especially in ELA and math to measure student progress in reading and growth in meeting the Common Core standards. However, there is not yet consistency and alignment across the grades in how assessment data is used to adjust curricula and instruction. As an example, grade five students take many ELA assessments, including, district-wide NY Ready assessments, iReady assessments, ReadyGen baseline, benchmark and performance tasks, TC writing tasks and Fountas and Pinnele leveled reading assessments. These assessments measure many of the same skills, however, only the previous year’s NYS ELA exams seems to have been used to across the school to uncover students who were ready for enrichment, or were two to three levels below the grade level standard. Additional analysis of assessment to across grades and subject areas is inconsistent, and varies from teacher to teacher. Among some common planning teams, discussions happen about adjustments that individual teachers make, but do not appear to be formalized across grades and subject areas. While iReady is used more to inform adjustments to instruction in some grades, its use in ELA and math varies widely across grades, with some using it to measure progress in math for only twenty-five percent of students and others for sixty-one percent of students.

- Common assessments are still being developed in some areas. Loosely aligned iReady assessments with non-fiction texts are serving as the primary means of assessing what students know.

- In seven of the nine classes observed, teachers used conferencing with students as their primary method for checking for understanding in instruction. In three classes, all math, the teacher used conferencing and questioning to stop a group of students for a reteach, demonstrating an adjustment to meet student learning needs. Beyond these classrooms, while teachers usually collected notes about student progress, few adjustments were made, leaving some students confused about the task or waiting for a new task after completing their work. While student self and peer assessments were seen in some classes, such as a first grade writing class, little assessment for learning or adjustments to meet student learning need in instruction was observed.
Additional Finding

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to staff through ongoing feedback and professional learning aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. The school leaders and staff provide ongoing feedback to families regarding student progress.

Impact

Teachers understand the school's expectations teaching and learning and are provided with time and training to meet the expectations. Communication from school leaders and teachers provide opportunities for families to understand student progress towards meeting the Common Core Learning Standards.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate high expectations for staff, through the use of a staff handbook, ongoing training in the Danielson Framework for Teaching components, and through Monday staff meetings, perhaps at the expense of time that teachers could spend on other professional tasks. There is also a white board that is used by the principal daily to communicate expectations for professionalism, assessments and communication with families. The staff handbook makes expectations clear, with suggested professional literature, instructional time for each subject expected, “classroom look fors” and how the room should be set up for instruction to meet the school's beliefs about group work and conferencing with students.

- Teacher observations cycles by school administrators and instructional coaches also provide teachers with ongoing training that is aligned with the school leader's expectations for teaching and learning and provide a system of accountability. Observation reports demonstrate feedback connected to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, as well as school-wide non-negotiables such as having lesson plans out and available at all times and expectations for process charts that should be available to students. Similarly, instructional coaches provide feedback that is aligned, both to the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the school's expectations. As an example, a math coaching log demonstrates support for a teacher in deepening student understanding through questioning and supporting an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) pair in adopting new models for co-teaching.

- Parents expressed that there is clear communication from teachers and praised the school's open door policy, in that they are always welcome into the school to discuss concerns and student progress. While parents also stated that they wished that they could utilize an online grading and communication system to communicate with their child's teacher, most expressed that they enjoy close relationships with teachers and often call, email and text about student progress. The school also has a parent handbook, monthly letters, calendars and progress reports. The progress reports, available in English and Spanish differ slightly in the lower grades from the upper grade reports, but all communicate levels of success across the subject areas and provide teacher comments about progress, both for academic and behavior. One progress report for a fifth grade student encouraged the parent to meet with the teacher to learn more about supporting her son's reading at home and encouraged the parent to send her son to afterschool for additional ELA support.