Quality Review Report
2016-2017

Muscota
Elementary 06M314
4862 Broadway
Manhattan
NY 10034

Principal: Camille Wallin

Dates of Review:
January 4, 2017 - January 5, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Lenneen Gibson
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

Muscota 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>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

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

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

| Quality Indicator: | 3.4 High Expectations | Rating: Well Developed |

Findings
School leaders and staff continuously articulate expectations connected to college and career readiness for all students by establishing strong partnerships with families. High expectations are conveyed to all students through an emphasis on life skills.

Impact
The culture for learning that school leaders and staff established contribute to all students’ progress in meeting high expectations. Strategic implementation of the middle school articulation process prepares students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents conveyed that the communication between the teachers and the families is personalized and ongoing via email or setting up individual meetings. A designated folder is sent home to the families to keep them informed regarding their child’s academic performance. Parents receive progress reports four times a year and parent teacher conferences occur twice per year. Families complete a conference goal sheet that is signed by all parties and provides students with a voice during the conference. At the end of the year, parents receive a comprehensive narrative report about their child that addresses the progress they have achieved. It chronicles a student’s proficiency in his or her academic courses, denotes a student’s reading level, as well as their child’s socio-emotional progression over the course of the school year.

- The school partners with families to further enrich science experiences for all students. Initiatives like Muscota Spark, an inter-disciplinary science and art program provides students with hands-on activities addressing specific science themes and extends learning. The class is co-taught by an art teacher and a parent who has received training in student engagement strategies including questioning and open-ended exploration. With support from the school, the parents have formed a science committee that further supports the science curriculum by arranging field trips and bringing in outside organizations such as the Columbia Medical Program which is taught by doctors who teach students about the medical field.

- Partnerships with choosing healthy and active lifestyles for kids (CHALK), is a program that is centered on ten healthy lifestyle habits. Each month, a specific habit is featured under the direction of a teacher. Information about CHALK is shared with the parents through newsletters and workshops. Middle school articulation starts in the fourth grade. In the fall there is a meeting with the parents of former alumni to discuss the middle-school application process. Students are prepared for the transition to middle school through a curriculum that emphasizes time management, organizational skills, and career development. Mock interviews, preparation of art portfolios, and a bi-weekly mathematics afterschool program are the additional supports that students receive in preparation for middle school.

- The school community consistently communicates expectations to the families via a parent handbook, and the Muscota Student-Parent Compact, a contract that delineates positive behaviors for students, holds parents accountable for the behaviors, and outlines the school’s commitment to the families. Parents also receive a weekly bulletin called, “Weekly News from Administration” that apprises parents of schoolwide events, initiatives, and items of interest. The school has a schoolwide homework policy to ensure that homework is purposeful and manageable. Teachers also produce bi-weekly newsletters that are sent to the parents. Additionally, the school website provides families with the current happenings taking place in their school.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Students engage in high levels of discussion and participation across the classrooms. Teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a belief that students learn best in a supportive community.

Impact

Student thinking is visible and all students benefit and produce meaningful work products. However, ownership of student learning was not evident as yet across the vast majority of classrooms.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that students learn best in a supportive environment and are given opportunities to learn from and with other students. This belief is a foundation for the adoption of the Responsive Classroom approach to learning. A student morning meeting was observed in which a teacher posed statements to the class and the students discussed them with one another and then as a class. The teacher made the statement, “Learning about ancient history is not important for it does not connect to our lives today.” Students decided if they agreed or disagreed with the statement presented and then moved to different parts of the room depending on their opinion. Most students moved to the “I strongly disagree” corner of the classroom. A student mentioned that we should not focus on today but pay attention to past history.

- Student discussions across the classrooms reflected high levels of student thinking and participation. In an English Language Arts (ELA) class, students read a book entitled, Arrows and used text evidence to respond to the prompt, “Why do you think it is important to send secret messages during a war?” Students discussed their reasons with a partner. One student stated, “So other people won’t learn what you are doing.” Another student mentioned to his partner that sending secret messages keeps the enemy uninformed. One student clarified another student’s statement reminding him to provide evidence. Students completed a conference note sheet, and referred to the section on their goal sheet that addressed the use of one or two pieces of information from the text. In a mathematics class, students explored equivalent fractions using models. Using accountable talk stems they affirmed their partners’ answers. However, ownership of student learning was not evident across the vast majority of classrooms.

- In a third grade dance class, student partners choreographed a dance with four distinct parts and eight counts that reflected a photograph the students were provided. Students were interpreting the essential question, “How does dance connect us with the world around us?” When students were asked what the task was, a student stated, “Finishing their dance, using photo-abstraction where a student choreographs a dance based on a photograph.” Students critiqued each other’s dance. In a third grade ELA class, students selected which model they wanted to use to draft their topic sentences. When a student was queried about the task, the student explained they were trying different ways to write their topic sentence for the writing piece on Egypt. Students were giving each other feedback on their topic sentence and made suggestions such as, telling them to use the storytelling model.
### 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

Lesson plans and curricular documents are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the integration of the instructional shifts with an emphasis on rigorous tasks across the grades. Curricula allow students to develop their own meaning and to solve real world problems.

#### Impact

Units of study provide rigorous tasks in all subjects for all students, which prepares them for their next grade.

#### Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricular documents indicates consistent alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and the integration of the instructional shifts. A fifth grade ELA unit requires writing a character analysis using the text, *Night of the Spadefoot Toads*. Students are to cite evidence from the text and use details to support their evidence. In a fourth grade science and ELA interdisciplinary unit, students design an emergency shelter to protect against extreme climate conditions. Using information from their research, students defend why their structure can withstand a natural disaster.

- In a third grade social studies, science, and ELA interdisciplinary unit plan, the essential question for the unit stated, “How is our culture and geography similar and different than Egypt’s? How has Ancient Egypt influenced the world?” A task had students creating a choice of landscape and climate maps of Africa. In addition, students are to conduct research and produce an informative writing piece that would include three to five sub-topics of their choice on Ancient Egypt. In a third grade ELA lesson plan, students are to respond to a text by providing evidence about the structure of a hermit crab. Supports such as graphic organizers, photos, and diagrams were referenced in the lesson plan. Differentiated tasks as well as, student choice of graphic organizers according to the student’s style of note taking were included in the plan. In addition, further supports for students with disabilities and English Language learners included the text being read aloud by the teacher or a student partner.

- In a first grade ELA lesson plan, the objective stated, “Students will be able to give their opinions about a topic and support their opinions with evidence from a text.” Students were tasked with responding to the question, “Does New York City take care of its wildlife?” Students were to base their opinion on information they read from an article and use evidence from the article to support their views. In mathematics plan accommodations for diverse learners included specific scaffolds for individual students such as a question reminder protocol and subtraction and addition formulas.
**Additional Finding**

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

Teacher’s use of rubrics, checklists, and “Can Cards” are aligned to the school's curricula. Teachers’ employ assessment practices that consistently check for understanding and self-assessment.

**Impact**

Meaningful feedback is provided regarding student achievement and promotes curricular and teaching adjustments that address student learning needs. Students are aware of what they must do to reach their achievement goals.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Samples of student work products indicate effective feedback is consistently provided to students. One student’s work was assessed using an extended response rubric. In addition to the student’s evaluation score on the rubric, the teacher provided feedback that stated, “Elaborate on your inferences connecting with the information.” Another sample of student work contained feedback that praised the use of details, addressed the use of quotation marks and suggested using a surprising fact in the introduction. Next steps recommended the revision of the main idea. During the student meeting, the students unanimously stated that the feedback they receive from teachers lets them know what they need to do to improve.

- The school has adopted a schoolwide assessment practice known as the “Can Card,” as a check for understanding. Students use this to engage in self-assessment and reflection of their work. Some categories for the “Can Card” include transitions, organization, and elaboration. Students also used hand-signals, checklists, and a buddy checklist as a form of self and peer assessment. Students also used rubrics to self-assess themselves in math using the Exemplars Primary Math Rubric. In a math class for diverse learners, the teacher adjusted the lesson by providing students with specific feedback such as, justification for selecting a specific problem solving strategy or posing specific math procedural questions for students to make adjustments to their work.

- Across classrooms, teachers used assessment strategies such as conferencing with students and completing conference notes on students. In one instance, a teacher stated a noticing based on looking at student work. In another instance, a teacher used a checklist to ensure students had clear expectations for the task. A teacher used a pre-made assessment sticker and placed it in a student’s notebook. For example, a sticker had the question, “Hermit crabs can be tricky to care of. Is this statement a fact or an opinion? How do you know?” In a third grade mathematics class, students were using a buddy checklist and the teacher walked around to monitor and provide specific feedback on work such as, “Explain the math.” “I like that you showed pictures and numbers.” In another mathematics class, students were working on problems that assessed the lowest common denominator, lowest common multiple and the greatest common factor. The teacher adjusted the problem solving session by stating that students will be called to the teacher’s table for a re-teach if students demonstrate any difficulty.
### Findings

Post observational feedback aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* informs teachers of their strengths, challenges, and next steps. School leaders utilize teacher observation data to facilitate differentiated professional development for teachers.

### Impact

Feedback articulates clear expectations for instruction while promoting teacher development and professional growth.

### Supporting Evidence

- A review of observation reports revealed the feedback shared with the teachers accurately captures their challenges and their next steps. An observation report chronicled the use of the Teachers College checklist to conference with students. Another report disclosed a teacher’s challenge with lesson planning, specifically, crafting lesson objectives that delineate how students will accomplish the learning objective. The feedback to the teacher included, using a descriptor, such as “by” when crafting learning objectives to ensure clarity of what the student will do to understand the lesson. It was also recommended that the teacher collaboratively plan with another teacher on a daily basis to better understand the writing curriculum.

- The principal shared that monthly evaluative and non-evaluative instructional walk-throughs are conducted and teachers are provided with feedback. A review of documents that memorializes the walkthroughs of specific teachers included: a description of the teacher’s classroom environment, comments shared with the teacher during the instructional round, next steps and a date for a follow-up visit. The administrator reviewed student math, guided reading, and writing folders. Comments about the student’s math folder stated that there was “clear evidence of learning targets.” For the guided reading folder, the comment referred to clear evidence that question prompts enabled students to articulate their thinking. The feedback to the teacher mentioned that students should have choice within their learning tasks, and suggested the use of Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) to raise the level of questioning.

- Based on the analysis of observations, the walkthroughs, and feedback data to teachers, the administration implemented a differentiated professional development plan for cohorts of teachers. The professional development typically occurs in three-six week cycles. Each cycle has a particular focus that is aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. For example, the first cycles are entitled, “Understanding and Interpreting Student Data Reports.” A review of the professional planning template provides a rationale for the professional learning opportunity and the use of data to develop next steps and adjust instruction accordingly.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

Distributive leadership structures are embedded and foster teacher collaboration with the administration. Teacher teams methodically analyze student work to develop strategies to improve instructional practices and student achievement.

Impact

Teachers play an integral role in making decisions that improve teacher pedagogy and student achievement. The professional collaborations that systematically analyze student work result in improved teaching practices and increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- A teacher team representing grades three through five conducted inquiry using the Vertical Slice Protocol to look at student work. The goal of the meeting was to analyze student work using the rubric to evaluate the student’s project revisions and the effectiveness of the rubric. An additional goal required looking at the criteria of the rubric to ensure it met the needs of the students. Notes were made regarding any patterns and trends in the student work. Teachers observed that the student work products, as well as the process, demonstrated increased rigor. Students were also aware of the assessment criteria, which was evident in their projects. The next steps included questioning the scaffolds that students would use in preparation for future projects, and modeling and teaching to the rubric.

- A review of teacher team meeting agendas and notes representing kindergarten through second grades revealed introspection into the current center time (Choice Time) activity structure. Teachers wanted to revamp center time to ensure that student learning is deepened through inquiry and exploration. Teachers engaged in book studies as well as teacher-initiated intervisitations. Teachers renamed the centers Creative Play Center, Building and Engineering, Author Collection, Art Center, Science Center, Reading Nook, and Math Center. As a result of the teacher collaboration, teachers devised a Choice Time rubric and a Choice Time observational checklist. As a result of grade teamwork center activities became cognitively challenging for students, and deepened student-learning experiences.

- Distributed leadership structures are in evidence during teacher team collaborations. During teacher teams, roles such as facilitator, timekeeper and note taker are rotated every three to six weeks. Each cohort has a teacher leader that meets with the cabinet and serves as the liaison for their respective grade. Teacher teams also devise the professional development plan for the professional learning communities. Thirty percent of the staff has been trained through the Teacher Leadership Program on facilitation techniques and protocols for looking at student work and data. Teachers also engage in teacher initiated classroom intervisitations. A review of documents show classroom intervisitations are captured using a form that chronicles the focus of the observation as well as the short and long-term goals for the visit.