Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S. 58 - The School of Heroes
Elementary 24Q058
72-24 Grand Ave.
Queens
NY 11378

Principal: Adeline Valastro-Tripoli

Dates of Review:
January 10, 2017 - January 11, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Daisy Concepción
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.4</strong> Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.4</strong> Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Proficient</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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.3</strong> 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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.1</strong> 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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.1</strong> 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>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4.2</strong> Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5.1</strong> 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>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Findings**

The school’s approach to culture building is centered on building leadership and personal responsibility for students. As part of developing coherency, the school has strategically aligned professional development for teachers, families, and students.

**Impact**

Students have risen to the expectations of being leaders and as such participate in decisions that guide school improvement. Professional development efforts have resulted in the school community adopting positive personal and academic behaviors.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school's governing philosophy for social and emotional growth of the students is through the development of leadership skills and preparation for the 21st century aligned to Franklin Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The entire school staff is trained in this program designed to ensure that students learn responsibility, and are accountable to becoming their personal best. As a result of this and various other social programs, both teachers and students stated that a school culture is present that fosters a safe and inclusive learning environment that engages students in the shared values of problem solving and teamwork. In a student meeting, students stated that teamwork and problem solving have guided the work in the school. As part of their 21st century skill sets they have conducted Internet research to seek out charity work and conducted polls to make effective selections. Students have also participated in campaigning for student government, writing speeches and learning about elections. Students in the upper grades went to lower grade classes and conducted a lesson on government and civics to explain to the younger students how elections work.

- Students spoke enthusiastically about how the social and emotional learning impacted their academics. School ceremonies such as “You got pinned” recognize students for exhibiting being proactive, honest, and hardworking as well as other exemplar behaviors. Students were quick to speak about planning school events such as Pajama Day, Spirit Week, and ongoing help to those students who are physically challenged and attend a school located inside their building. They connected this work to the school program that promotes understanding, the importance of inclusion and learning to help others who are different. Other students spoke about collecting for the food drive, toy drive and supporting a local pet shelter.

- Professional learning is extended to the school community to sustain this positive environment. In the classes visited, students were tracking academic and personal behaviors and were using language such as “I am being proactive when I prepare my materials for my conferencing with the teacher.” A workshop on the school’s new social emotional program was provided for the parents to ensure a home school connection. The principal focuses on activities where parents and students can participate together such as the Dad’s take your child to school day, the pinning ceremonies that recognize academic behaviors and the Academic Olympic grade assemblies where students challenge each other in math and literacy and are expected to display teamwork. Exits slips from parent workshops underscore full parent support. One parent wrote, “I think that these activities will greatly benefit the kids!”
Area of Focus

<table>
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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

School leaders support teacher development through feedback aligned to the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and peer inter-visitation. Teachers including those new to the profession receive feedback that accurately captures their strengths and challenges.

Impact

This system of frequent observations results in providing the necessary next steps for improved teacher practice. While there is a system for inter-visitations, this practice as yet is not strategically being used so all teachers will benefit.

Supporting Evidence

- The peer inter-visitation program allows for frequent cycles of observations for teachers to observe strong practices in their colleague’s classroom. School leaders have focused on using questioning and discussion techniques and student engagement as school instructional priorities. Both the visiting and host teacher use an “Inter-visitation Reflection” form. One visit addressed those teachers who needed support in differentiating for English Language Learners. A review of these notes for the four teachers indicated they listed designing coherent instruction and engaging students as a main concern. While there was some peer feedback regarding the room’s resource center and the use of visuals, there was little clear evidence of how the observation was being strategically used to support the identified domains. Teacher forms demonstrated bullet notes about what they observed such as “the use of flashcards and other visual aids”. However, how the materials and resources supported student learning outcomes and student engagement not clearly indicated.

- A mentoring form for a new teacher reflects that the new teacher was provided with an opportunity to visit a veteran teacher as a next step to support questioning and discussion strategies. A follow up observation provided the teacher with feedback that commended her use of class discussion which was directly linked to the inter-visitation.

- While a review of teacher observations demonstrates that almost all teachers receive clear feedback that captures their strengths and challenges while providing clear expectations for teacher practice, this is not always the case. One observation stated, “The lesson has a clearly defined structure, and the pacing of the lesson is appropriate, provides most students the time needed to be intellectually engaged with ‘instructional outcomes designed to challenge student thinking, inviting students to make their thinking visible.’ A recommendation to the teacher is to continue to maintain conferencing notes and support student feedback. In two cases however, teachers who co-taught together in a Collaborative Team Teaching class received observations that read virtually the same and had the same ratings. While this was not found in the majority of reports, this practice hinders teachers from receiving personalized feedback aligned to the teacher’s needs and professional goals.
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 curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous learning habits.

Impact

School leaders have made purposeful decisions to build coherence such as focusing on opinion, across all grades. Higher-order thinking is consistently required in academic tasks, so that all learners must demonstrate their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- A review of curricula documents indicates that students are exposed to high levels of thinking. In a grade five unit on the Civil War, the text *Heart and Soul* is read and students examine how sensory details contribute to meaning, tone and perspective by contrasting the peaceful and elegant setting of plantations with the lives of the slaves and the battlefields. A performance task for the unit requires a close reading of the text to gather text based evidence to write “an analysis of the difference between the South before and after the Civil War.”

- The grade six English Language Arts curriculum map includes the instructional shift addressing writing from a variety of sources and the use of academic language while focusing on common core argument writing through several end of unit performance tasks. One rigorous performance tasks requires students to write a “Position Paper on: Do the Benefits of DDT Outweigh Its Harmful Consequences?” This unit holds students accountable for using media sources and determining the credibility of these sources while using evidence to support their claim. However, the unit did not incorporate the use of counter claim, one of the changes in the Common Core, which prepares students to be ready for their next level.

- A review of grade one to grade six curricula maps indicates clear alignment to the Common Core with a focus on the use of close reading to examine language and understanding the main idea. All units ask students to use evidence for their opinion or argument. A grade one lesson objective asks, “How can we state an opinion by analyzing a text?” In a grade two lesson, students learn how to support their opinion using text evidence. While a grade five objective asks, “How can we focus on opinion writing by analyzing tone and summarizing a text?” Thus, the school purposefully ensures next level readiness in their English Language Arts curriculum. While there is evidence that there is attention to the shifts, there was little evidence of the integration of the shifts across grades preventing coherence from being realized.

- In grade two, students engage in early algebra skills by classifying numbers up to 20 as odd and even by using tens frames. In this unit, students take apart numbers and compare known and unknown quantities in different positions in equations to represent unknown numbers. The science curriculum provides students opportunities to understand how scientists think and problem solve. In one grade four science unit students engage in hands on laboratory experiments where they predict, observe and examine different substances to determine their ability to mix with water and explore which objects will sink or float based on its composition and shape. Students explore the physical properties of water by examining volume, mass and density and learn how mathematical understandings are needed to learn this content-concept.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy

Rating: Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies and supports, such as a teacher resource center, consistently provide students entry points into the curriculum.

Impact

The effective use of these scaffolds allow for high levels of student engagement where students demonstrate higher order thinking in both conversation and work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In a fifth grade class, students reading *Bud not Buddy*, stood before large charts and used different colored markers to answer questions such as, “What is the significance of Bud’s promise to Amos?” Students’ books were filled with notes from previous “stop and jots” where students had made an observation and took notes. Students were heard actively referring to their notes and as they discussed text based evidence to answer the question. In a computer science class students worked in small groups on different coding projects. In one group, students had a mouse shaped robot on a tabletop maze. Students used wipe off boards to draw a sequence of arrows in various directions representing the course the mouse would have to run in the maze. Students compared notes before coding the robot to run the maze. When the mouse hit one of the walls, students engaged in problem solving conversation to find a solution.

- In an English as a New Language class, learners reading the book, *The Year of Miss Agnes*, worked on different graphic organizers to add dialogue to the story. One organizer required students to add dialogue to the beginning of the story and another to add dialogue based on the climax. Large information charts, sentence starters and pictures supported students. There was a resource center with glossaries, charts with transitional phrases and vocabulary words. All students were able to complete the task and some students went beyond simple sentences to add dialogue between characters. However, in a self-contained class whose students had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), not all the scaffolds resulted in full cognitive engagement. Students struggled to complete organizers that required them to draw an idiom such as “speak your mind.” Organizers were varied, one was a T-chart where students matched the meaning with the idiom and with another student had to draw the idiom and state what it meant. However, students could only repeat what the teacher had written on the board and could not explain the meaning of the idioms indicating a need for a different approach to meet their needs.

- In all classes visited students worked in purposeful groups. Four levels of tiered activities based on recent data were observed in all classes. Interactive white boards displayed four bands of color each listing a different task for a group of students. Students worked on different activities with organizers clearly marked with color dots on the corner of the sheet. Students were able to state what group they were in and how that activity differed based on ability.

- In a grade five social studies class on the Civil War, students were able to select from a range of text based questions that ran across all the levels of the Depth of Knowledge protocol. Students were able to demonstrate their thinking by using the text as a reference point for writing a lengthy, detailed response that included an explanation or analysis of the text.
Additional Finding

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

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and checklists aligned with the school’s curricula that include rubrics as well as self and peer assessment. The use of pre and post common assessments is employed across subjects and grades.

Impact

Teachers provide students with actionable and effective standards based feedback and track student progress in order to make instructional adjustments in English Language Arts and math.

Supporting Evidence

- While teachers have adapted the rubrics included with their curriculum by aligning it to the school grading policy, not all rubrics across grades and subjects as yet provide explicit criteria for students to demonstrate mastery. The “Information Writing Rubric” accompanying the school literacy program lists “Organization” as a criterion. This criterion at a level 4 requires students to have organization that is “clear and effective.” Strong use of words, phrases, and clauses to link ideas. Although this rubric lacks a clear portrait of mastery teachers are able to provide students with clear, actionable aligned feedback that can move students towards their next step. For example, a rubric with a score of 3 in “Organization” received actionable feedback of “Group related facts together in each paragraph.” Another student with the same grade received feedback advising the use of additional quotes to support the claim. Both sets of feedback are essential to improving student work.

- Notes from a teacher team working on argument writing reveals that this grade has already identified gaps in their rubric and have begun to revise it so a clear portrait of mastery will be produced. Minutes from these meetings reflect that teachers provide strong feedback, but “students need a better understanding of the expectations and elements” in the argument essay. The teachers decided to create a checklist that students could use to “edit, peer edit or meet with the teacher.” Subsequent teacher team minutes show that the checklist focused students and “allowed peers a step by step way to offer advice” and “teachers feel more confident that students are seeing the archetype of an argument essay” with the resulting essays having “more meaningful arguments” with “explanation of evidence.”

- Pre and post end of unit performance tasks are given across grades and subjects. A review of teacher tracking sheets demonstrates that teachers use the data from these assessments to plan instructional groupings. An end of unit exam indicated many of the students struggled with multiplying fractions while only three students struggled with estimating fractions. Revisions were made to lessons, spiraled back to this topic and purposeful learning groups developed. Kindergarten teachers analyzed data from their narrative writing assessment task and noticed that students struggled with “development” when they wrote. Teachers incorporated conferencing and used their interactive writing time to focus on examining how details strengthened writing resulting in students scoring above average on their next writing assessment.
Findings

The majority of teachers are part of vertical or horizontal teacher teams engaged in structured, inquiry where they consistently analyze assessment data and student work.

Impact

These effective collaborations result in improved teacher practice and progress towards goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- At a teacher team meeting, teachers stated that collaborating together has resulted in strengthened instructional practice with regards to their use of assessments to meet student needs. The online program has provided additional information to help target students. A review of teacher team meeting notes shows that teachers have surfaced gaps with the assessment program and they have developed an approach to ensure that there is progress towards goals for groups of students. Notes from one grade five meeting revealed that teachers looked at their literacy program and realized that the pre-assessment combined both inference skills and the use of evidence to support a claim. Teachers decided to revise the assessment and collect information on each item separately. By focusing on the use of evidence apart from inference, data indicates an increase in student use of evidence on grade five from unit one to unit two. Similar results were observed for pre and post assessments in kindergarten where teachers identified organization in writing as a focus and in grade six where inference skills were targeted.

- Subject as well as specialty teams for Special Education, and English as a New Language meet regularly. These teams are organized into two cohorts, where kindergarten through grade two act as a team and grades four and six collaborate as another team. Grade three moves back and forth between the teams according to need. During meetings teachers share “glows” and “grows” and discuss what is happening in their classrooms by subject. Adapting their colleague’s practices for their grade is frequently a focus of their meetings. While these conversations tied to the school’s instructional focus have strengthened teacher instructional practice, there are missed opportunities to engage in work across the grades to work towards school wide instructional coherence.

- The school has an online program that creates many diagrams and charts for teachers to use to support their practice. However, teacher inquiry drives the promotion of achieving school goals and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Notes from a kindergarten team meeting reflect that teachers observed a decrease in student scores on math assessments from chapter 1 and 2. After analyzing the student work, teachers identified that tracking while counting and distinguishing greater and less was the root cause. They agreed to add counters, cubes, and reword certain questions to be more “developmentally appropriate” resulting in student progress as evidenced in an increase in scores from chapter 2 to chapter 3.