Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 093 Ridgewood
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 24Q093
66-56 Forest Ave.
Queens
NY 11385

Principal: Edward Santos

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2016 - November 2, 2016

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

I.S. 093 Ridgewood serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. 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>
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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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>
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### School Culture

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<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>
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<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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### Systems for Improvement

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

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<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
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<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>
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</tbody>
</table>
Findings

School leaders and faculty have developed detailed and extensive curricula across grades and subjects that strategically integrate the instructional shifts by exposing student to fiction and nonfiction texts with a focus on academic vocabulary and on citing evidence. Additionally a series of tasks across the curriculum maps consistently emphasize rigor.

Impact

Students are exposed to rigorous tasks that demand analysis and synthesis and foster argument writing so that students demonstrate higher order thinking across grade and subjects. This is supported by the strategic integration of the shifts resulting in coherency that promotes college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- A grade seven math unit reflects the focus on academic vocabulary such as “integer,” “absolute values,” and “terminating and repeating decimals.” The unit also requires students to justify their mathematical thinking in writing. In a grade eight social studies unit, students are exposed to terminology of the Civil Rights Movement such as “Voting Rights Acts,” “sit-ins,” “protest,” and “marches.” Students in this unit write an argument essay on why the Vietnam War was viewed negatively by the American society. In a grade seven science unit, students learn the academic vocabulary of “mass” and “buoyancy” to be able to made estimations about an object’s density. Students make estimations and test these mathematically, then write short responses justifying their observations and hypotheses and stating how they confirmed their estimations mathematically.

- Units are designed to build thematically across the span of the curricula so that there is cumulative knowledge that builds upon the previous unit’s learning. In the grade six English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, the first unit focuses on short stories of journey and survival. The central text of this unit is a biographical novel, A Long to Walk to Water. In this novel about the Sudan civil war the themes of survival and leadership are examined through the main character, Salva. Supplemental fiction such as “Thank You Ma’am” by Langston Hughes is thematically tied to the unit. Students focus on academic vocabulary and on text-based short, argument responses exploring the theme through the character’s actions. One of the essential questions in this unit is the impact of the environment on the characters. This idea of the environment and the effects on those living in it, then becomes the focus of the next unit where students also read information and fictional texts and focus on academic vocabulary to explore ecosystems and the effect these have on living beings. Students write argument essays to analyze the problems within ecosystems and to propose solutions. All ELA and social studies units across all grades follow this format.

- Rigorous tasks are embedded in units to ensure that students are prepared for the culminating tasks. A grade six unit on Mesopotamia includes two medial tasks where students read a series of texts make annotations, and make judgments about the impact of technology on the daily lives of ancient Egyptians. They then write argument essays and use citations from sources. In grade eight, students are required to write an analytical mini-essay on the significance of elements in the story of Prometheus by explaining how the elements contained in the plot make Prometheus a classic myth. In another ELA task, students are asked to write a literary analysis on the themes connecting the myths of Cronus with The Lightening Thief. All units contain text sets or shared texts of different Lexile levels to ensure all students have access to the curriculum. Units contain multiple scaffolds and structures such as appendices for vocabulary, discussion starter stems, writing checklists, figurative language keys, gallery walks, small group guidance, bilingual dictionaries, vocabulary images with hints, grammar worksheets and classroom discussion protocols to ensure that all students are engaged and able to demonstrate their thinking.
## Findings

School leaders regularly evaluate and adjust curricula as well as evaluate the quality of teacher teamwork and professional development.

## Impact

While school leaders collect multiple data sources from meetings and surveys to evaluate curricula and the quality of teacher teams, there are missed opportunities to purposefully evaluate teacher team work and professional development with a particular attention to what is taught and how it is taught.

## Supporting Evidence

- In a discussion with school leaders on classroom observations, the focus was on how instruction varied from classroom to classroom based on the level of engagement, differentiation in lessons and the presence of higher order thinking. In some classrooms, supports were very explicit and strategic for sub-group populations but not for all students. While there is a schoolwide focus on the use of evidence and argument and classroom discussion and there were learning charts to support discussion, there was no one definition of the intended outcomes or goals or on what the end product looked like so that practice would be consistent. While there were class discussions across all classrooms, in some classrooms students were required to use summaries to synthesize information and discuss themes, and in other classes discussions were limited to merely stating the main ideas. With regard to assessments, while students showed work with actionable feedback and they demonstrated their progress, there was not a clear picture of what mastery looked like, and the rubrics did not build on each other along the continuum towards mastery. One of the teacher discussions was about how to define mastery in a unit or in assessments and how to deliberately teach towards mastery and to develop consistency in instructional practices. This started a conversation with the principal on looking to develop coherence between what is being taught and how it is being taught.

- A review of curriculum maps and teacher assessments demonstrates that teachers make adjustments to both instruction and assessments across the subjects on each grade; however, there is little evidence to demonstrate that there are vertical conversations across the grades to ensure both alignment and coherence. While the assistant principals meet with their grade and team leaders weekly to discuss classroom observations and to look at data from exit slips and medial tasks to inform instructional adjustments, these adjustments happen on each grade discretely and are not looked at vertically. This hinders the ability to build on the Common Core’s staircase of complexity as a way of moving student progress to student mastery. At a teacher team meeting, teachers were asked how they shared information across the grades to build vertical alignment. Teachers shared that the principal’s email on instructional learning walks informed them of data on other grades; however, there was little opportunity for teachers to be able to meet with other teachers of the same content from different grades in order to make adjustments to their maps and sequence level of instruction.

- Agendas and minutes from cabinet and school leadership team meetings as well as teacher observations provide evidence that school leaders regularly meet to discuss and to adjust professional development based on school walkthroughs and observations. However, the data was shared without an overarching picture of how these data served to purposely drive teacher practices to support student mastery. In a meeting with teachers many shared that they understood the information being shared with them about expectations and from data sources and classroom observations and walkthroughs, but they were unclear as to how all of these tied together to support or to create a picture of what they were working towards and what that meant for students.
Findings
The belief that building content knowledge and deepening understanding happens when learning is grounded in conversation was apparent across classrooms in both student work products and student discussion.

Impact
This belief has led to students using text-based evidence, engaging in discussion to explain and justify their reasoning, supporting argument writing as well as critiquing the arguments of others. As a result of this belief, there are high levels of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- In a grade six Integrated Co-Teaching social studies class, students used evidence from secondary sources to support their opinions as to what influenced early human migration. Students were grouped by instructional levels and asked to select the top four reasons for early migration. Students prepared by annotating various related texts. Some students used organizers and note takers to gather evidence for the discussion. Students were heard giving reasons for migration such as the ice age, flooding and the fact that early man was comprised of bands of hunter-gatherers who did not yet know about agriculture. Each table had a discussion facilitator who was tasked with ensuring that students discussed the content, that they used text-based evidence to support their claims, and that all students had the opportunity to participate. This structure of a discussion facilitator, posters displaying group discussion norms, and other charts with accountable talk stems supported the belief that student discussion is a vehicle for supporting content development and was apparent across classrooms.

- In a grade six class, English Language Arts students had annotated "post its" in preparation for a discussion of the novel, The Skin I’m In. Students were observed engaging in a conversation about various characters’ internal struggles. One student shared an observation about how the main character, Maleeka, addressed her struggle with her very dark skin by focusing on clothes. The student shared, “Maleeka has no confidence, and she thinks that clothes could change her appearance and make things better.” Another student agreed with this observation and responded with a question, “I want to ask a question about Ms. Char who is the new teacher at school. She also has a skin problem-her scar. Do you think that this is why Maleeka hates her?” While students in this class displayed ownership in their conversation by using text-based evidence to support their idea that Ms. Char and Maleeka are parallels for each other, this was not the case in several classrooms including a social studies class relying on a teacher-structured conversation which limited discussion to simply describing photographs about child labor in the early 1900’s, and did not lead to a discussion about how these pictures revealed the central idea of child labor.

- In a grade seven science class, students were engaged in determining the densities of blocks and the blocks’ ability to sink or float in water by first estimating then applying the mathematical formula for density. Student focused on a diagram showing several blocks at difference levels of submergence and used the given information of a known block to make predictions about the density of the other blocks in the diagram. Students estimated the density of the other blocks in the figure and provided reasons for their estimations. Students were able to discuss how the amount of surface area protruding from the water served as a reference point for their estimations. Students then confirmed their estimations by using the formula, \( p = \frac{m}{V} \), to support their claims. Students worked on their mathematical calculations on worksheets before sharing their thinking with a partner.
Additional Finding

### Findings

Teachers and students use rubrics across classrooms and subjects to inform their work. Common assessments are used to determine progress across grades, subjects and in classrooms.

### Impact

The use of rubrics across the school allows students to receive actionable feedback about their performance and work products. Results from common assessments are used to adjust lessons and revise curriculum to meet student needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- A grade six social studies writing rubric provides students with feedback on developing introductions, using supporting evidence, developing structure, and attending to grammar. The teacher feedback stated “You clearly understand the structure for formal writing. Our next step is to work on elaborating the meaning of the text evidence.” In a grade seven math rubric on adding integers, the teacher feedback was “Your work followed the 4-step problems, and you explained your plan well. Be careful with the signs- they go before the number.” An English Language Arts grade six writing rubric provides the following feedback, “Excellent claim; however, let's work on finding relevant evidence to support the claim.”

- School leaders have outlined a common assessment framework called Data-Driven Classroom Assessment (DDC). This assessment is based on the knowledge that the Common Core Learning Standards expect all students to use academic vocabulary, cite text-based evidence, summarize main idea, and demonstrate content knowledge in their content-based argument essays. These four items comprise the framework of the DDC school common assessment with the data being collected and analyzed to inform curricular adjustments. The results of a grade eight pre-assessment on a Walter Dean Myers author study unit showed that eighty percent of students had difficulty employing higher-level vocabulary. Teachers focused on vocabulary development in the supplemental texts for the remaining of the unit. As a result, eighty-five percent of these students earned a score of three or higher on their post-argument assessment in vocabulary on the unit. In science, the grade eight team reviewed student performance results from their assessments on the adaptation cycle unit. They identified a trend of students scoring lower on questions related to genetic engineering. They decided to make genetic engineering the topic of this unit’s argument essay and selected supplemental resources to support this topic. The impact of their decisions led to eighty percent of students of all students on the grade demonstrating an improved understanding about genetic engineering and argument essays.

- In a teacher team meeting, teachers spoke about adjustments to the curriculum maps by refining common assessments so that they would have more opportunities to make adjustments to their instruction. Teachers stated that while all units had a pre-assessment, a mid-unit assessment, and an end-of-unit assessment, there was a need to make further adjustments to curriculum. A review of the curriculum map confirmed the addition of two medial tasks in the English Language Arts and mathematic units, which allowed teachers to check in more regularly throughout the unit to make frequent adjustments. A review of teacher team meetings notes revealed that these new common assessment checkpoints are being used. A grade six social studies unit pre-assessment revealed a need to focus on elaborating the evidence being cited for their claims. As a result teachers made adjustments to their lessons and used the medial task in the unit to collect evidence on student use of evidence. Data from the medial task demonstrated that seventy percent of students on the grade were now adequately explaining their supporting evidence. This medial task allowed the teachers to make further refinement to their lessons to address and support students before the end-of-unit culminating task.
Addition 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 ensure that the fourteen teacher teams are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that support leadership and capacity building.

Impact

Teacher collaboration strengthens instructional capacity and promotes the achievement of school goals. Teachers play an active role in the school and have a voice in key decisions on student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In one teacher team meeting, grade eight math teachers used a protocol to look at student work to discover why students had solved an equation correctly, but had difficulty graphing the equation. Teachers revisited the misconceptions that they had predicted previous to starting the unit to verify that this issue had not been already addressed. Teachers discussed the demands of the task and what students needed to demonstrate. As the teachers discussed the problem, they wondered whether the standard asked students to both solve the equation and graph the equation. They revisited the standard and discovered that standard that they were addressing only required students to demonstrate the solution of the equation. One teacher stated, “Well, I don’t consider it mastery if students are not able to graph their solution.” Another teacher replied, “Did we design that example for mastery, and does that problem belong to that standard?” This opened up a conversation on more carefully looking at assessment items to ensure that they align with the standard that they are teaching. Teachers decided to change the rubric that they were using as an assessment to reflect the new finding in the standards. They also decided to revisit checkpoint three in this unit in order to align it with what the standard was actually asking students to do.

- A review of teacher team meetings shows there are three-to-four cycles of inquiry during the school year. Teachers collect information on writing and on the use of academic vocabulary in their Data Driven Classroom Common Assessment in order to make adjustments in writing across the disciplines to support student progress. In mathematics, teacher teams focus on identifying common student misunderstandings, on increasing student discussion and on the use of scaffolds to support student thinking and to prepare them to engage in discussion. These notes also demonstrated a schoolwide focus on argument writing and on the use of evidence. Teachers stated that this focus on argument writing and on the use of academic vocabulary has strengthened their practice because they can see that this work is the basis of college writing. A review of teacher reflections from professional development sessions shows that teachers have also strengthened their instructional capacity in differentiation.

- In two teacher team meetings, teachers stated that they have wide latitude and discretion in their professional work and have choice of materials. Teachers suggest books for professional study groups such as the book, *Teaching English Language Learners Across the Content Areas*, which was purchased schoolwide. They also suggest instructional materials such as the newly purchased special education phonemic awareness program and the clickers, which are a technology-supported assessment tool. Teachers also recommended programs for students' social-emotional development such as the *Beautiful Me* program focusing on girls and body image. Teachers have enriched the curriculum by securing trips for students to Washington, DC; Philadelphia, and Boston. One teacher added, “If teachers feel that there is something that we can do to enrich students’ experience, we just tell the principal, and he makes it happen.”
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 the staff through explicit emails, newsletters, and staff conferences and hold teachers accountable through observations. Teacher teams and staff consistently communicate high expectations to students.

**Impact**

There is a system in place to provide teachers with training and accountability for these high expectations. Teacher teams and other staff provide students with ongoing and detailed feedback and advisement support throughout their three years at the school.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In three teacher meetings, teachers agreed that the principal communicates high expectations weekly in a clear manner through very specific and highly detailed emails, which outline the instructional focus findings from the various walkthroughs and observations. A review of emails and newsletters reveals expectations such as a focus on quality student work and on developing student goals. Emails also outline this year’s focus of including student choice in their assignments as a way to honor student voice, to develop autonomy and to build student accountability. Emails also evidenced directions to the teachers to embed time for student discussion in lesson plans. There are also expectations for environment with a focus on student supports such as charts and prompts to strengthen the school wide instructional focus of using student discussion as a way of increasing rigor and developing language and deep content knowledge.

- Teachers shared that there is accountability for the school expectations though formal observations, but also through weekly informal walkthroughs by the assistant principals who observe their grade and by the principal who identifies a content area such as math, science, or social studies and visits the content across the grades to ensure consistency in practice. These observations form the basis of the weekly emails they receive from the principal.

- A review of the professional learning calendar demonstrates alignment between the expectations communicated by school leaders and the professional development that teachers receive. In one document, teachers engaged in a study group supporting student choice and autonomy in the classroom. Another professional development session focused on teachers’ strengthening interdisciplinary collaborations to support the development of the curriculum maps. Another opportunity focused on teachers’ sharing successful scaffolds for the students that they share in common.

- In student meetings, students shared that they are provided with ongoing and detailed feedback preparing them for the next level throughout their three years at the school. Students described a triad of an assistant principal, dean and guidance counselor who are assigned to a cohort of students to provide support to the students for the three years that they are at the school. This team is assigned at grade six and supports the students’ adjustment to middle school freshman year. This team remains with the students to grade seven where they focus on the students on academic grades and the exploration of high school as a preparation for senior year. The same team follows the same students to senior year in grade eight with a focus on articulation to high school. For the three years at the school the team reviews student work, discusses student progress and arranges for open house visits, admission to specialized schools and portfolio building for students applying to schools requiring auditions. Students shared that they have developed deep bonds with the team and that being together for three years ensures there is accountability and personalized advisement for all students through their years in middle school.