Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Jean Nuzzi Intermediate School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 29Q109
213-10 92nd Ave.
Queens
NY 11428

Principal: Karleen Adam Comrie

Dates of Review:
March 7, 2017 - March 8, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Thomas McKenna
The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

### Information about the School


### School Quality Ratings

#### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

*To what extent does the school...*

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

### Systems for Improvement

*To what extent does the school...*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
Personalized interventions, shared cultural expectations, and a coherent schoolwide approach to supporting positive student behaviors through quality conversations and relationships are in place. School structures allow each student to be well known by at least one adult.

Impact
The school’s Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) approach to culture building, discipline, and social emotional supports, along with structures in place that build strong adult-student relationships, has created a safe and inclusive school culture focused on academic success. Incidents of student behavior not aligned to school beliefs have decreased dramatically.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has focused on developing and integrating a PBIS system over the last three years. The school has a PBIS team made up of ten staff members and was first introduced to school leadership as a viable program by two staff members. Staff members, including teachers and guidance counselors, have assumed a large leadership role in designing and rolling out the program, with leadership support and input from students through the evolution of the program. Students voice is included in the school culture and student have the opportunity to become PBIS ambassadors, assume a more formal role in the program and take leadership roles in assemblies, workshops, and peer mediations. Awards and recognition ceremonies for both academic and inter-personal behaviors are a core component of the program.

- As a result of the PBIS system, the school has had a dramatic reduction in incidents. School leadership and teachers report suspensions have dropped from 271 in 2015 to 171 in 2016 to 87 in 2017. In addition, reported classroom incidents have reduced from 77 to 34 over the same time period. Results are confirmed by the citywide Online Occurrence Reporting System and the school’s three year analysis report of PBIS data. According to one school parent, “this is a completely different school, a different atmosphere, a major improvement from three years ago.” This three year drop in incidents coincides with a 10 percent increase in ELA and 7 percent increase in Math on the New York State exams over the same time period.

- A major component of the PBIS program is a schoolwide focus on quality relationships and quality conversations. While this is tailored towards the classroom and improving instruction and learning, it is also key to the school’s culture building and in facilitating student-adult relationships. All students reported having more than one adult that they trust and turn to for academic and social emotional supports. Parents also identified a host of school staff that they felt their children trusted, many of who had already intervened or supported their students at some point. The training and shared language around quality conversations and quality relationships is referenced in classrooms, in hallways, and in school announcements. When concerns for specific students arise, teachers confer in either grade teams of PBIS and monitor supports.
Findings
School leaders and teachers use common rubrics and assessments to determine student progress toward goals. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student self-assessment.

Impact
Teachers use assessments and rubrics to provide actionable feedback to students. Additionally, teachers use multiple methods to check for understanding during lessons and make adjustments in order ensure all students' needs are being met. However, the depth and regularity of those checks for understanding vary by class.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Some examples of that feedback include a note to a grade seven math student that stated, "you explained how you can determine the sign of the product without solving in this case, but next time describe a rule that could be used every time!" Another note for a math project in the same class stated, "Next time, revise and remember that graph steps should increase by equal increments, so what might be a better way to show this answer?" Additionally, evidence of the use of rubrics by teachers and students across grades were evident on hallway bulletin boards, classroom displays, and in student work portfolios.

- In addition to Degrees of Reading Power (DRP's), Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) Math Performance Tasks, NYSESLAT Assessments, and in class formative and summative assessments, and a range of classroom-based checks for understanding, some teachers employ a "Student Struggle Sheet" in their classes. This running record consists of three sections a student fills out; I currently feel I am struggling with, my teacher helps me with my problem by, and the things I have been doing to try to fix this problem are. Some examples include students noting a struggle with citing evidence or summarizing a response; while student created next steps include utilizing a close reading strategy or practicing restate, answer, cite, and explain (R.A.C.E.) strategies. This more detailed and reflective check for understanding creates another actionable record for teachers to use in adjusting curriculum or instructional practice.

- Teachers continually check for understanding throughout daily lessons through check-ins and make adjustments or re-design student groups according to the results of those assessments. During a grade seven social studies lesson, the teacher facilitated a check-in with the class to determine which students felt comfortable with the mini-lesson on the Articles of Confederation and the task that had just been assigned. Using a system of thumbs-up meaning understanding, thumbs-down meaning not understanding, and a slanted thumb meaning that students were not sure, the teacher elected to break down the task directions into smaller steps on the board. In another classroom, a grade eight ELA teacher circled the room conferring with table groups, asking brief text and task questions of students to gauge understanding. A teacher in the grade seven accelerated math class circulated the room with an iPad keeping a running record of student progress that creates a usable and organized data set that the teacher can use to make effective and informed adjustments to meet student learning needs. Several other teachers employed checks for understanding which ranged from first-to-five visual checks to exit tickets, but some instances of students being unclear of next steps and teachers failing to adjust instruction were observed.
## Additional Finding

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

### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts. Across grades and subjects, rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized for all students, including ELLs and students with disabilities.

### Impact

Coherent curricula promote college and career readiness for all students. A diversity of learners have access to the curricula and tasks, and are cognitively engaged.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers can articulate how they ensure curricula is aligned to both the New York City Scope and sequence and the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for grades six, seven and eight through teacher team-based planning and revision using common school planning documents and an on-line curricular platform and repository. In addition, each team is assigned a Special Education and an ESL teacher to ensure planning includes modifications to support all students. A curriculum team made up of four content area teacher-leaders manages the vertical and horizontal alignment amongst teacher teams, resulting in school wide curricular coherence. Staff can also articulate their strategies for incorporating the instructional shifts within lessons, focusing on using an inquiry-based instructional approach across classes that includes building academic vocabulary and engaging in rich and rigorous evidence based conversations about text.

- A review of curricular documents across grades evidence purposeful decisions to implement Common Core aligned curricula and ensure integration of the instructional shifts. In a grade seven math lesson plan addressing the use of proportional relationships to solve real world math problems, the guiding question in the plan requires students to analyze relationships and choose the appropriate concept for application. In addition, that lesson and all others reviewed contained specific lesson components on academic vocabulary building. In a separate lesson, students are to read and interpret data while also displaying data and tables by constructing picture- and bar-graphs. Students then interpret the data in graphs by solving work problems and writing number sentences.

- Across grades and subjects, unit plans emphasize high-level questions and require students to make their thinking visible in their work products. A grade eight ELA lesson details how students will begin with text predictions and then move to citing evidence and developing a logical argument related to non-fiction texts, including the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. In another grade eight lesson, students in social studies are required to analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources (both text based and visual) and draw conclusions on the impact of trench warfare during World War I.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect a coherent set of beliefs on how students learn best, which includes student led discussions and peer review. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking, participation and ownership.

Impact

Shared beliefs among staff about how students learn best foster student discussions and work products that evidence high levels of thinking and student ownership.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers guided students through activities requiring that students develop academic language to support arguments in discussion and writing across the content areas, as well as identifying and citing evidence in texts. In nine of nine classrooms visited, vocabulary walls were evident and in-use. In addition, all classes had anchor charts related to citing and using evidence across all subject areas. A common example seen contained multiple sentence starters such as, “according to the text,” “on page _ it states _,” and “the author stated _.” All postings were all individualized to each classroom, connecting academic vocabulary in all subject areas and the grade level of the class as well. In addition, students in all classrooms were able to quickly identify the specific posting that applied to the lesson in which they were engaged and were eager to demonstrate their ability to use those words appropriately. Another school wide instructional strategy RACE, was posted as an anchor chart in each class with specific connections to that subject area and grade, and actively employed by the teacher in seven of the nine classes that were engaged in writing tasks.

- Teachers facilitated lessons in which students were highly engaged and actively participating in cooperative learning and student-to-student discussions, embodying the coherent set of beliefs that students learn best when they work together. A grade seven social studies class was engaged in a fishbowl activity related to multiple texts and had prepared using RACE and student led discussions. In a grade eight living environment class, thirty students were assigned to groups of five. Each group chose a particular component of the human endocrine system to research and design an appropriate lesson plan, based on the workshop model and emphasizing higher order thinking skills. During the visit, a student group was presenting on the pineal gland, which included a brief mini-lesson and then a series of table stations in which students led other students through a close-reading activity, a visual mapping task, and paired discussions culminating in question creation related to the pineal presentation and connections to the other components of the endocrine system. The teacher circulated the room listening to paired discussion and asking comprehension questions of participants and presenters. Student work products in the class, including a research based report that required students to specify a problem, design and conduct an experiment, analyze data, and report findings, demonstrated, along with students actively discussing the products with the reviewer, high levels of ownership.

- The school had on display dozens of in depth social studies research projects from a recent district wide competition. Every class participated and students won first place awards for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, as well as an additional third place award for seventh grade. The projects were Common Core aligned and student designed, containing visual representations, and in-depth research papers and bibliographies. Several students verbally presented to the reviewer, demonstrating high levels of thinking and ownership.
## Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote the achievement of school goals and implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards. Distributed leadership structures, such as the multiple team leadership opportunities throughout the school, are in place.

## Impact

Teachers’ collaborations have strengthened their instructional capacity. Across the school, teachers have built leadership capacity and have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

## Supporting Evidence

- Review of agendas and accompanying meeting minutes, along with evidence gathered during classroom observations, evidence that all teacher teams are using protocols in their analysis of student work and data in order to build coherence around promoting the shared instructional goal and school wide focus to improve students’ writing. The school's grade level common planning teams meet weekly to review students’ work together using a looking at student work protocol. The teams evaluate teacher practices based on the analysis of student work and investigate how student achievement data corresponds to the six instructional shifts in ELA and math. This analysis is captured in an online platform and is accessible to all school staff. The impact of this work thus far is evident in the reported increased use of data to move instruction and support student academic growth in all content areas. Teachers report and can speak to the use of data in all of their planning and revisions.

- In addition to common planning teams, school leaders have built a curriculum mapping team representing lead teachers from each content area department. Team members use the information shared during common planning to revise the curriculum and to improve the access entry points for all students. When it is needed, they will revise the unit plans to ensure that teachers and students work are aligned for growth in all content areas.

- The interdisciplinary PBIS teacher demonstrated their input on school level decisions and evidenced their leadership capacity during a meeting determining that an emphasis on the two Q’s of the school – quality conversations and quality relationships – was essential to reach the school’s 2017 CEP goals related to literacy gains. Teachers aligned around an initiative to support accountable talk and rigorous questioning components across classrooms and worked with department and grade level teams to integrate that focus explicitly into class rubrics. With a particular emphasis on grade eight, the intervention demonstrated an over 12 percent Lexile level gain across the grade from September to February.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path of college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates a unified set of high expectations.

Impact

Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness. Supports ensure that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- Staff members have built a culture for learning that provides all students, especially those in high-need subgroups, with focused and effective feedback that includes next student steps in learning goals aligned with the schools college and career readiness vision. The school has integrated its PBIS system into a mechanism for promoting college readiness by focusing all students and staff around the core areas of being positive, productive, and professional, while focusing on quality conversations and quality relationships. This shared language, and shared understanding of those terms through school wide workshops and trainings, allows teachers and students to push each other in productive ways. One student reported, “Even when I get a 4 on an assignment, my teacher can push me to do more, and I know why she does that and why it’s important.” In addition, all students craft explicit S.M.A.R.T. goals in each of their academic classes, which are referenced and reviewed with teachers throughout the semester. Teachers also report that this understanding helps them in their own revisions and modifications in instructional and assessment practices. These high expectations are demonstrated in the grade eight science and math Regents based classes resulting in over one-third of graduates passing one or more high school Regents examinations.

- Parents are consistently provided with their child's progress, benchmark goals and applicable strategies their children can use to improve their learning. As demonstrated by agendas and attendance reports, parents have access to DRP, MOSL, Math Performance Tasks, and NYSESLAT assessment data and are offered trainings in understanding the pedagogical strategies and assessment tools used by the school. In the 2016 Learning Environment Survey, 96 percent agreed, “the school staff regularly communicate with parents/guardians about how parents can help students learn,” showing a strong home-school connection and partnership in supporting student progress. In the parent meeting, every parent present reported being engaged in email, texting, or phone calls with at least one teacher on a weekly basis related to student progress and support.

- The school provides ongoing, clear lines of written and verbal communication to families that include online reports of student progress, parent-teacher conferences, parent information sessions and workshops, and a parent handbook. The parent members of the school leadership team report that progress reports are sent to families every quarter as a means to communicate with parents on students’ academic and behavioral progress. Tuesday afternoons are open for parent meetings with teachers to further discuss students' work, but the school hosts families on an almost daily basis for student centered conversations. All families have been given a code for PupilPath, an online tool to view student’s progression in all classes, communicate with teachers, view attendance and behavior logs, and the school has provided ongoing training for parents on its use. In addition, the school offers workshops on academic literacy, learning styles, preventing chronic absenteeism, the high school application process, and college and career readiness.