Quality Review Report

2016-2017

P.S./M.S. 114 Belle Harbor
K-8 27Q114
134-01 Cronston Ave.
Queens
NY 11694

Principal: Stephen Grill

Dates of Review:
May 9, 2017 - May 10, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Thomas McKenna
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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</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>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Proficient</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>
<td>Well Developed</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>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Area of Celebration

<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 consistently communicate and model high expectations to staff. Additionally, school leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness to families and partner in supporting students.

#### Impact

The school maintains and benefits from a culture of mutual accountability around high expectations. Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness.

#### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate expectations for staff through daily memos, staff meetings and school-wide principal announcements rooted in the language of the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Clear expectations are also conveyed through observation report feedback. Reports can convey expectations ranging from highlighting student engagement and feedback to piloting high leverage new initiatives. Teachers report a high level of ownership in fostering school culture and multiple teacher teams, including the school data team, the student conference team, and the attendance team, meet regularly with school leaders to plan, revise, and analyze progress on school culture related issues and initiatives. Agendas and planning documents show a history of meetings and clearly note expectations for school leadership and their progress along committed timelines, as well as progress for individual teachers and teams.

- The school hosts many parent workshops throughout the year related to building strong school-parent partnerships to support students. Parents report receiving regular email and text communication, and documents show a record well-attended PTA meetings and events. These have included an 8th grade/high school preparation session, a middle school application session, a New York State Assessments overview, and several college night parent workshop. Parents and school staff also collaborate on an annual career day to expose students of all ages to the endless career opportunities that are available to them. Past participant parents have ranged from forensic investigators to medical doctors to lawyers to licensed plumbers. Commenting about the previous year’s Career Day one student reported, “Different parents came in from multiple jobs. They showed us what their jobs really mean and got me to plan out what I want to do. I don’t know yet, but I know I have to plan.” All students agreed with this statement.

- Parents and staff also collaborate on an annual college day for students, which include parent presenters, as well as representatives from local colleges. To further support the mission of embedding college and career readiness in the school’s culture, the principal, in consultation with the School Leadership Team (SLT) has engaged with St. John’s University as the school’s official community based organization partner. This partnership provides students, particularly grade seven and grade eight students, with regular exposure to college staff and workshops, as well as multiple opportunities to engage in college preparation activities on the university campus itself.
Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula, reflecting a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best. Across these same classrooms, teaching practices consistently provide multiple entry points and high-quality supports.

Impact

Teaching practices and strategies across the school lead to engaging students through multiple entry points and higher-order questioning, especially through the school’s emphasis on integrating Socratic seminars and fishbowl activities in all grades including kindergarten. However, evidence for meaningful extension activities beyond planned lessons was inconsistent.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders stated the belief that students learn best when instruction and activities are tailored to address their specific needs and learning styles, within the context of rigorous instruction, collaborative teachers, and a supportive school environment. These beliefs were demonstrated through the observation of a uniform writing focus across all classes and opportunities for peer learnings ranging from turn and talks in math classes to group station reading projects in kindergarten. In a grade four ELA integrated co-teaching class (ICT), students moved from journal entries related to the prior day’s reading to small group comprehension questions, to assigned groups to explore cause and effect in the text. At all points students were required to cite evidence from the text to support their arguments and were often pushed to explain their thinking. Socratic seminars, debates, and fishbowl discussion activities were also observed.

- Alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards was evident, with a particular emphasis on literacy standards across all content areas including math, science, and social studies. The integration of the instructional shifts into classroom instruction was evidenced through classroom observations, especially engaging in rich and rigorous text-based discussions and writing using evidence from textual sources. Additionally, variations of co-teaching models such as one-teach/one-assist and parallel teaching were apparent. Teachers also utilized multiple anchor charts for student self-direction in using accountable talk, academic vocabulary, and writing prompts appropriately during class time. Most teachers observed during the review referenced anchor charts when related questions were asked by students in lieu of directly answering their questions.

- Teaching strategies across classes offered scaffolds, including visual cues, strategic groupings and pairings, small group and individual conferences, technology assistance and language supports to English Language Learners and those students identified as low achieving; however, most scaffolds did not provide extensions for those students in classes ready to engage with more rigorous content and tasks. For example, although the grade five math class doing a lesson on 3-D shapes had three addition extension activities available for more advanced students, similar extensions or opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking through purposeful entry points were not evident in the majority of classrooms, thus diminishing opportunities for student ownership of learning.
## Additional Finding

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

### Findings

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

### Impact

Curricular decisions and alignment to the instructional shifts ensure coherence and rigor that promote college and career readiness habits for all learners across grades and content areas. Academic tasks consistently emphasize higher order thinking and skills.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers can articulate how they ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core for kindergarten through grade eight. Teacher team-based planning and revision using common school planning documents include modifications to meet the needs of all learners in the school, with particular attention to students with disabilities. Staff can also articulate their strategies for incorporating the instructional shifts within lessons, focusing on their modifications and augmentations to curriculum to include emphasizing student discussions using text based answers and academic vocabulary in all classes and highlighting real-life applications in math.

- School leaders and teachers spoke to the incorporation of Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* levels in all lesson planning. Multiple examples provided to the review showed a clear understanding of the application of higher order thinking questions. A grade four reading lesson on the text “The Earth Dragon Awakens” includes level 1 questions having students recall information from the story, but later questions ask students to apply concepts from the story to their own lives. In addition, documents also show an integration of differentiation strategies in all lessons across the school.

- Essential questions and tasks within lesson plans demonstrate alignment to Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge (DOK)* Levels 3 and 4. Lessons at all grades, including kindergarten, featured some level of citing evidence and drawing conclusions, and many reading classes included analyzing author’s purpose. In a grade one science lesson, the teacher planned for multiple levels of questioning, building from level 1 questions such as “what are the stages in the life cycle of an apple,” to level 4 questions such as, “How can we apply the phrase ‘life-cycle’ in other ways besides to apples?” The lesson included specific strategies for differentiation and groupings, as did all other lesson plans reviewed.
### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use rubrics, checklists, and grading policies aligned with the school’s curricula. School leaders and teachers use common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals.

### Impact

Students utilize teachers’ actionable and personalized feedback to make meaning of their learning and increase their achievement. Departmental teams, supported by school leadership, lead the analysis of data from common assessments and grade team findings to inform school-wide curricular and instructional adjustments so that all students demonstrate increased mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across all classrooms visited, samples of student work products contained evidence of teacher written, feedback. Feedback consistently reminds students to refer to research conducted and textual evidence to support claims. Some examples of that feedback were: “Like we discussed in our conference, be sure to use more transitions words or phrases and include more details in your conclusion,” and “Clear claim and great use of vocabulary, but can you cite an additional piece of evidence from the text to support your claim?” One grade two student said, “The teacher writes comments on how I can improve on all my drafts and I use them to do revisions all the time.” The vast majority of students interviewed echoed this student’s sentiment and evidence of student revision is present throughout students’ work folders.

- The vast majority of teachers and students use rubrics as assessment tools and feedback mechanisms. Students also use common self-assessment checklists on topics such as peer editing, planning, and revising, and all classes use the *6+1 writing rubric* for assessment. Additionally, rubrics were used as assessment and feedback tools attached to work in student portfolios, as well as, displayed on bulletin boards in hallways and in classrooms. Teachers across the vast majority of classrooms posted an exemplar piece of work with a rubric and checklist visible and encouraged students to reference it in self-assessing their work. When asked, students reported that they are always aware of what exemplar work looks like and, as one student noted, “I always know what steps I would need to do to get there.”

- Faculty analysis of students’ GoMath! assessments resulted in a decision to embed math supports through strategic instructional groups, especially in the school’s many ICT classes. Analysis of students’ ReadyGen writing assessments resulted in a school-wide focus on writing for the 2016-2017 school year, as well as, the design of curricular addendums that detail writing tasks across grades and subjects. Faculty data analysis also led to the adoption of the *6+1 writing program* and rubric which all teachers use to assess writing. Students across the school respond to baseline, mid and end-of-year writing prompts and faculty use this data to monitor school wide progress in writing. In addition, the faculty utilize Fountas and Pinnell, Codex, and Engage NY assessments, and the Scantron Performance Series to track student progress and inform adjustments to curricula and instruction. ELA proficiency rates, including students in the lowest third of performers and English Language Learners, have consistently risen each of the last three years. For example, schoolwide ELA proficiency rates rose from 2.92 to 3.12 over that time frame, while rates for the lowest third rose from 2.31 to 2.59, and the percentage of students testing at a Level 3 or 4 rose from 47% to 61% overall.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: | 4.1 Teacher Support and Supervision | Rating: | Well Developed |

Findings

School leaders support teacher development through a strategic classroom observation cycle. Promptly written feedback captures teacher strengths, challenges, and next steps using the Danielson Framework for Teaching.

Impact

Formal and informal classroom visits result in written feedback for teachers that make clear the expectations for teacher practice and the supports available to help teachers meet their individual goals. Teachers often seek out school leaders for additional help to enhance their instructional practice, as well as engage in school wide intervisitations practices.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders conduct frequent classroom observations and provide feedback utilizing the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Each rated item in the report is accompanied by specific, detailed evidence from the observed class to support the rating. Next steps for instructional improvement are included throughout the class-specific evidence, directed to specific categories of the Framework and at the close of each observation report. In the documents reviewed, the next steps included memorializing all data collected in checking for understanding for use in differentiation, consistently ensuring that students have multiple opportunities to explain their thinking as part of completing tasks, and planning for possible student misconceptions as part of the lesson planning process. School leadership designs the observation schedule to incorporate data from the school’s three assessment cycles and modifies it based on feedback and additional data from teacher teams throughout the year.

- Observation reports contain feedback that captures teacher strengths and weaknesses and is accompanied by next steps for teachers to improve their practice and impact student success. For example, one observation report recognizes a teacher’s strengths by noting, “During your small group instruction and conferences, you provided students with clear next steps to further their learning,” and “Your instructional groups were formed based on a quick assessment practice which allowed you to organize and group students by ability and teach all students the same material but adjust the level of teacher support and tailor instruction for each group.” In the same report, the administrator provides a clear next step for growth in advising the teacher to “Use a structured system (e.g. popsicle sticks) to ensure that virtually all students are called upon during discussion, as there were some students who were called upon multiple times in the lesson.” Each report reviewed also noted references to goals set for the teacher at the start of the year and connected aspects of the observation to progress towards those goals. For example, a grade one teacher focused for the year on creating opportunities for meaningful student reflection in her class was given next steps that align with those goals. Observation notes highlighted areas of the lesson where there would have been opportunities to integrate reflection and provided the teacher sample questions.

- Teachers expressed that observation feedback has helped them develop as professionals. School leaders report that this year teachers have become much more self-aware of their need to develop in certain areas. Citing the rubric language around student engagement, several teachers asked school leaders for support and continued feedback to help them reach highly effective in this domain, requesting and receiving frequent informal observations. In addition, teachers have moved to a system of “open classrooms” and intervisitations across grades and departments to offer on-going peer supports and feedback on practice.
Additional Finding

Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development
Rating: Well Developed

Findings
The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations focused on student achievement. Distributed leadership structures are embedded into the school, resulting in effective teacher leadership.

Impact
Collaborations within grade teams and the vertical inquiry team have strengthened teachers’ instructional capacity, established a level of school-wide instructional coherence, and improved student performance and achievement. Across the school, team structures have built leadership capacity and given teachers a voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- In staff interviews, most teachers spoke about the benefit of the multiple team opportunities within the school. A primary benefit noted was the coherence across classrooms in their instructional practices, such as the focus on student discussion. All teachers interviewed spoke to the opportunities with their teams to inter-visit and both provide and receive feedback from team members. Grade teams are focused on horizontal alignment of curricula and pacing, while departmental teams focused on vertical alignments for sequencing and schoolwide instructional coherence. Both sets of teams have dedicated meeting times in the schedule, though teachers on those teams actively meet and plan outside of the regular school day. Additional team opportunities for teachers include the intervisitation team, the student-led conferences planning team, and the data team.

- School leaders and teacher leaders, including team, instructional, and department leaders, identify distributed leadership practices and structures that are deeply rooted in the school’s day-to-day operations and foster a culture in which teachers provide continual input into strategic decisions affecting student achievement. For example, a teacher facilitates each grade team, the school offers regular teacher-led professional development and workshops facilitated by a variety of teachers across the school, and two teachers share the responsibility for schoolwide data management. Teacher leaders also meet regularly with school leaders to conference and plan. Interviews with administration and staff, as well as a review of agendas and planning documents, reveal that distributed leadership is built into all key decisions.

- A cross grade/content team is the intervisitation team. This team has spearheaded an expanded view of intervisitation to support teacher capacity across grades and departments. Specialists such as special education and ESL teachers are also part of the team. One teacher presented a video of herself engaging in a Socratic seminar with her 7th grade class. She had joined the intervisitation team to “push her practice” and take advantage of support from colleagues in meeting the needs of students. When asked about it, the teacher responded “When I am struggling with my practice, someone taking low inference notes can show it to you in a way that makes it all click. It is sometimes one simple thing and one strategy, and that may be all you need to reach your students.” These intervisitations are documented, notes and next steps are recorded and tracked, and practice is better informed across the school. School leadership meets with the team leader and reviews all meeting notes and assists in planning and next steps. This has led to increased coherence in teacher practice focusing on Danielson 3b – student engagement and increased student achievement for all learners; as noted in the school’s growth in ELA and Math proficiency levels both school wide and including the lowest 1/3 of performers.