Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 204 Oliver W. Holmes
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 30Q204
36-41 28th St.
Queens
NY 11106

Principal: Faye Erstejn Kotzer

Dates of Review:
January 31, 2017 - February 1, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Carlos Perez
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. 204 Oliver W. Holmes 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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</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<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>1.4 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>Proficient</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>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

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<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>Proficient</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>
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<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>Proficient</td>
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<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>
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</table>
## Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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### Findings

All curriculum reflects rigorous tasks and higher-order thinking skills for all students and are designed in a way that offer all students multiple entry points for their learning.

### Impact

Curriculum is aligned to the Common Core Learning standards (CCLS) and engages students in high level rigorous tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- All unit plans are designed and planned for in a way that emphasizes rigor and higher-order thinking skills. The seventh grade English Language Arts (ELA) unit plans for December and January encompassed planning that included academic vocabulary, content/skills, language objectives, and essential questions. In addition, unit plans incorporate various ways that lessons will accommodate English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Lessons incorporate scaffolds such as text chunking, graphic organizers, visual cues, and modeling how to cite evidence for claims. Additionally, unit plans address building vocabulary by having students use dictionaries for translation, using context clues to determine the meaning of words, and following specific students Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) which states that they are required to practice their inferencing skills. Plans also emphasize opportunities for the teacher and student to conference for students to demonstrate their learning both verbally and in writing.

- Curriculum for all subject areas clearly detail the ways that all learners will be engaged, including those high-achieving students. The eighth grade science curriculum map shows extensions that will be offered to students who are successful with the material and require additional ways to engage them. High achieving students are offered opportunities to do additional research projects, journal writing, and assisting a fellow classmate who may need assistance. The sixth-grade math curriculum displays planning that allows for more challenging math problems for those students to work on, in groups, while the teacher works with those students who require further assistance.

- Individual lesson plans display various ways that ELLs and students with disabilities will receive support during lessons. All lesson plans reviewed, shared higher-order thinking questions that all students should be able to answer, with those students who need additional assistance receiving support in a variety of ways. For example, several lesson plans include station work that allows students to engage in group activities, where they work together and engage in rich rigorous discussions. An eighth grade lesson plan reflects how and why students will be grouped that will help offer support to all students. For this lesson, students are grouped by formative assessment results, student’s contributions from the prior lesson’s Socratic seminar, and the teacher’s beliefs of which students work better in certain groups. Planning also details how the teacher will use their time during the lesson with each group, giving more attention to those groups that require the most support.
Findings
Teaching practices are aligned to the school’s belief to how students learn best. This includes student centered lessons, group/station work, and classes filled with rich student discussions. However, these practices are not seen throughout the vast majority of classrooms.

Impact
Throughout some of the classrooms visited, students were involved in rigorous activities that involve high level of student thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- During a grade six math lesson, students worked in pre-determined groups, as the teacher visited each group and conferenced with students. The focus of the lesson was for students to learn why tables and graphs are useful and be able to write and graph an equation based on a table. During the class, students had opportunities to compare answers with their group members. The teacher used questioning strategies that was also connected to prior learning. The teacher asked, “Think about x and y, how did we use them earlier in the year?” Although the teacher did question the students, students did not have opportunities to turn and talk to a partner and discuss a question in detail, prior to sharing with the teacher.

- There were examples of rigor displayed by students throughout the classrooms visited. During a grade three ELA lesson, students learned how to use essay outlines and evidence organizers to write body paragraphs that are coherent and well supported. During the lesson, students cited textual evidence, both in writing and verbally to each other and the teacher. Students verbally explained the connections between their evidence and their claim. For example, after one student read their paragraph, group members asked questions of each other such as, “What was strong about that paragraph?”, “What would you change?” and “I would add the reasons why he could have been innocent.” However, in other classes, structures for rigorous student conversations were not as evident. During a math lesson, the teacher connected the lesson to real-world situations by using the example of gaining weight when discussing a math problem. However, structures that allowed students to engage in rigorous and challenging dialogue was not evident throughout all classrooms visited.

- There is a belief in the school that students learn best when engaged in rigorous group discussions, station work, and active partner “turn and talks.” During an ELA lesson, students had opportunities to engage in turn and talks to discuss questions posed by the teacher. Students used accountable talk prompts when sharing out to the class in addition to using academic vocabulary with their responses. During a science lesson, students were able to verbally explain, using academic vocabulary, how adaptions help an organism to survive in their environment. Students shared that it is like getting used to a new school or buying a new jacket. One student shared with their groups “it’s like having to get used to something, you have to adapt to it.”
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

Teachers use rubrics and common grading policies through classrooms that are aligned to the school's curriculum. Teacher assessment practices include ongoing checks for understanding and offer feedback to students most notably using “glows and grows.”

Impact

Teachers provide students with feedback that is actionable and specific. Teachers adjust their lessons as needed based on their classroom assessment practices.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are regularly using a variety of ways to check for understanding during lessons. Teacher’s conference with students individually and in small groups while other students are in engaged in group work based on skill. Teachers also evaluate students while they are engaged in peer and self-assessment. During an ELA lesson, students performed close reads of a poem with a partner. In addition to evaluating their partner during the readings, students documented how reading with a partner helped them come to any new conclusions about the poem. They also worked together to establish the theme of the poem and the text evidence that supports their belief.

- Teachers and students both shared how rubrics are used as a part of every unit and lesson. Students use rubrics as a way to minimize the errors in their work and receive the highest grade possible. Students shared that they enjoy using rubrics because they know exactly what is expected for every activity. Rubrics are attached to all student work as well as the feedback that teachers give to students that is aligned to the rubric. Teachers offer feedback to students using “glows and grows” as a way to capture strengths and offer next steps to the areas of focus. Additionally, teachers highlight the areas in the rubric that shows where the students scored. Feedback on an ELA/social studies assignment offered “glows” to the student that celebrated their use of text based evidence and their overall presentation to the class. The teacher’s “grows” to the student included how the student’s use of visuals during the presentation need to be clearer with respect to yellow journalism and that there needed to be further inferences about the causes of the issues in the article.

- Evidence of student and peer reflection was seen in many of the classrooms visited. In several classrooms, students had opportunities to engage in partner turn and talks and group discussions. Students reflected on their learning by answering inquiry questions and writing them on post-it notes which are then placed on posted paper in the front of the classroom. Students can come to the board and read their classmate’s responses and gauge where their responses were with respect to what their classmates shared. Student are also complete in peer critiques in many classrooms. These are opportunities for students to share with their classmates what they like about their work and why, and also offer next steps as well. During the student meeting, students shared how they like being able to share their feedback to their peer’s during peer assessment. One student shared, “I like to know what my classmates think. It helps me make any corrections before I hand in my paper to the teacher.”
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectation</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teachers and school leaders have a system of communication that effectively shares academic progress and expectations to all students and parents. This is most noticeable using student led conferences.

Impact

Students and their families receive support and preparation towards next steps to college and careers.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses several ways to communicate with parents how their children are performing academically. All students and parents have access to the online grading platform which allows them the ability to follow their child’s progress. Parents and students all shared their knowledge of the system and how they check the system regularly. For those parents who required assistance familiarizing themselves with the system, the school hosted several parent workshops that shared detailed instructions on not only how to access the system, but ways to maximize its usage. The school also begins to share with the students the importance of college and careers through the annual college fair, regular meetings with their guidance counselors, and the implementation and use of student planners that is filled with information about higher education for parents and students to review.

- The school is making every effort to establish practices that are connected to college and career readiness. There is a strong push to make real-world connections in every class and subject area. Allowing students opportunities to self-assess and work in collaborative groups is preparing them for life after middle school and beyond. During the meeting with students, they shared all the school does to prepare them for high school and beyond. Students shared that their guidance counselors meet with them regularly to help with the high school application process and speak with them about where they want to go to college and what they think they want to study. Students also shared that they feel this school is preparing them for high school by allowing them and expecting them to take higher and more challenging courses such as algebra and living environment.

- Student-led conferences offers parents the opportunity to hear how their children are doing in school directly from their children. Throughout the school year, students prepare presentations that detail how they are doing, in all of their subjects, as well as in areas they feel they need additional support. During one of the student-led conferences, the student gave her parents a detailed report that included results from homework assignments, class assessments, and class projects and assignments. The student was able to share copies of her work and gave her parents reasons for why she didn’t do as well as she had hoped on certain particular assignments. The student also shared results from all of the class assessments and explained in detail why she received a low grade on a social studies assessment. During the meeting, both the parents and the teacher praised the student for not only the work she presented, but how she presented it.
Additional Finding

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

Findings

School leaders offer support and feedback to teachers through a detailed and specific cycle of teacher observations. Teachers are well informed as to their strengths and areas of focus, with a clear set of next steps for implementation in future lessons.

Impact

Through the cycle of observations and feedback, teacher practice is supported, elevated, and is aligned to individual teacher goals.

Supporting Evidence

- Prior to beginning the observation cycle at the beginning of the year, all administrators go through a norming cycle where they all visit classrooms at the same time and discuss their findings. The principal shared that this is done in order for all administrators to be on the same page with respect to the feedback they offer teachers. The administration meets with all teachers face to face after all observations, whether formal or informal. During those meetings, school leaders supply the teacher with several resources that they can use to move forward in their lessons. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared how one of the things they really enjoy about the post observation meeting is that they will leave that meeting with a good amount of resources. During the post observation meetings, the administration shares feedback, not only on the lesson they observed, but feedback is also provided for the lesson plan as well. All teacher observation data is tracked and kept in binders as well as on the online platform to gauge where progress is being made in specific domains and in what areas teachers need additional support.

- Feedback to teachers is specific, timely, and offers clear expectations and next steps for all. Feedback that was offered to a teacher included specific ways that they could enhance their questioning and discussion techniques. Suggestions included, using more wait time after posing questions which will allow students more time to think about their responses, and the need for more open-ended questions to incorporate discussion protocols that will promote student exploration. In addition, the administration asked that this teacher to setup a time to meet with a specific colleague to get assistance on how to create a more student-centered classroom. In addition to feedback that address areas of focus, the administration regularly captures teacher strengths as well.

- The administrator and teachers start each year by engaging in initial planning conferences with all teachers. During these meetings, the administrator and teachers review all student and teacher data and use this time to develop teacher goals and the process by which those goals will be attained. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared how the planning process is a “real partnership.” Teachers feel supported throughout the year in attaining their goals and making necessary adjustments as needed. The administration shared that several times throughout the year they evaluate teacher progress and help teachers adjust goals by either adding more or less to those goals. Administrators monitor teacher goals by using observations, conversations with teachers, analyzing student data, and through conversations with students when they visit classrooms. Teachers shared that they feel supported by the administration. They shared how leadership is always following up to see if their recommendations are being implemented and are always asking, “How can I help?”
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

Teacher teams meet regularly to analyze assessment data and student work. In addition, teachers have several opportunities to take part in leadership roles, most notably as teacher leaders and as members of the instructional cabinet.

Impact

Teacher practices are supported and there is clear progress towards meeting teacher goals. Teachers feel as if their voice is heard and are a valuable part of the decision-making process.

Supporting Evidence

- Structures are in place that allow teachers to take on leadership roles in a variety of ways. Every grade has team leaders that act as a liaison between the teachers and administration. Furthermore, an instructional cabinet was created where teachers can voice ideas and suggestions that help with school improvement. Through the instructional cabinet, teachers have a voice in the implementation and purchasing of all instructional programs. The instructional cabinet works closely with staff and the administration in order to supply the teachers and students with the best options for instruction. During the teacher meeting, teachers shared how they feel that their “voice is heard” in the school. They enjoy being a part of the decision-making process and feel as if their input is valued and welcomed.

- Teachers have opportunities to review student assessment results, classroom student data, and best practices with respect to students they share on a regular basis. Teachers regularly meet in order to discuss and track student progress. During a grade eight team meeting, teachers analyzed ELA midterm data and looked for trends and how they can be addressed across all curricula. During this meeting, teachers discovered a pattern of concern with respect to how students make connections and distinctions between individuals, ideas, and events. Teachers decided since they were still working on the novel, *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, they would take the court case from the book and connect it to a current case, or legal issue, to help students make those connections and inferences. Teachers did the same for two other findings which included responding to conflicting evidence, or viewpoints, and analyzing the detail structure of a paragraph.

- Teacher’s regularly turnkey learning they acquire when they attend professional development. Teachers shared how student station work was something that they wanted to implement. A group of teachers were sent out for training. When they returned, they were expected and willing to turnkey the information to their colleagues. In addition to outside professional development, teachers also shared how they themselves frequently learn from their colleagues and how this “was not always the situation in the past.” During the teacher meeting, teachers shared how there is, “Much more ownership in what we do here now.” Leadership roles have grown to include, department leads, a data specialist, new teacher leaders, and an IEP leader.