Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Redwood Middle School
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 28Q332
133-25 Guy R Brewer Blvd.
Queens
NY 11434

Principal: Lisa Reiter

Dates of Review:
February 16, 2017 - February 17, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Terrell
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

Redwood Middle School 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><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></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>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>
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<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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### School Quality Ratings continued

#### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>
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<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>
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#### Systems for Improvement

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<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<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>
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<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>
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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>
</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>
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Area of Celebration

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
The school maintains a culture of trust and positive attitudes which are reflected in structured programs that focus on building a positive environment and discipline through collaboration. Students are known well by staff members who provide social-emotional supports.

Impact
An atmosphere of respect emanates throughout the hallways and classrooms. Social-emotional supports align with students’ learning needs.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, and all teachers stand in the hallways to greet the students as they report to their classes in the morning and as they transition during the day. The students and staff greet each other by name as they say, “Good morning” or “Hey, looking great today.” During a student meeting, the students stated that they feel safe in their school. In response to the question, “What would you miss if you moved to another school?” a student responded, “The principal welcomes all cultures and diversity and treats everyone fairly, and I would miss that.” The school embraces the voices of its student body through the student council. Members of the student council stated that their goal is to have fundraisers, such as a bake sale, to raise money for school trips. The student council meets with their coordinator weekly and with the principal bi-weekly. They are planning to discuss a schoolwide dance for all grades at their next meeting with the principal.

- Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) provides a structure to motivate students to engage in appropriate behaviors. Students can earn “Redwood dollars” and “Redwood trees” for demonstrating appropriate behaviors. For example, all students who are on time for the advisory morning meetings receive three Redwood dollars. The dollars are redeemed for items at a monthly market. Redwood trees are earned by the collaborative efforts of the whole class as they work on maintaining the core values of Go Red, which expects students to be Responsible, Empathetic, and Determined. Using kind words and engaging in kind acts, such as supporting peers who are having a difficult time staying on task, can earn the whole class Redwood trees, which are distributed by the classroom teacher and tallied schoolwide at the end of each week. Students stated that they prefer to earn the Redwood trees because they offer them an opportunity to go on trips as a class.

- Students meet in small groups every morning at the beginning of the day with their advisor during Morning Circle. They engage in a process called “Restorative Practices.” During this time, students are provided with a quote for reflection. Then students take turns in the circle sharing how the quote will help them to meet their daily goals. During an observation of this process, the students responded to the following quote by Barack Obama: “The future rewards those who press on. I don’t have time to feel sorry for myself. I don’t have time to complain. I’m going to press on.” A student shared that even though you may not have a lot, you should not feel sorry for yourself but keep moving on. The principal shared that the students use “Restorative Justice” to address off-culture behavior where they have opportunities to reflect and talk about options to more positively resolve conflicts with their peers. In addition, the attendance support team calls the home of any student who has been absent for five or more days to create a support plan with the parent for the student.
**Area of Focus**

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

Across most classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the articulated belief that teachers must meet students where they are by designing intentional scaffolds aligned to Danielson *Framework for Teaching* and the instructional shifts. While most lessons consistently provide differentiated tasks, the quality of the tasks do not strategically provide high quality supports and extensions for all students.

**Impact**

A common framework that is aligned to the curricula and pedagogy informs shared beliefs. Teaching practices meet most students at their instructional levels to support higher-order thinking skills as reflected in student work products.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The principal and staff shared their belief that intentional scaffolds, which are informed by data, must be designed to meet each student at his or her instructional level. A review of teacher lesson plans reflects the inclusion of various tasks for groups of students. All teachers use a schoolwide lesson plan template to design their lessons. The plan includes a learning target captured in the form of an “I can” statement. It also requires alignment to the Common Core Standards and instructional shifts. Tasks are front loaded with sentence starters for some groups and the use of a graphic organizer such as Big Idea I, II, and III, with space for text-based evidence to support each Big Idea.

- In an Integrated Co-teaching (ICT) math class, the students were engaged in partner talk about how to find the percent of a number. The learning target stated, “I can find the percent of a quantity by modeling and using ratio reasoning.” The students talked with partners about how to determine the number of left-handed baseball gloves a store received in a shipment of 400 gloves in which 30 percent were left handed. Some groups of students had a worksheet with a plain bar graph. Other students had a bar graph that was sectioned into parts with 30 percent of 400 = _____. While the tasks were differentiated to support students at their instructional levels, there was no opportunity for all the students to design their own strategies to solve problems to support higher-order thinking.

- In a social studies class, the students were observed on a gallery walk using graphic organizers to gather information from images about causes of the Revolutionary War. The students were provided with one of two graphic organizers. One had sentence starters to record their noticing and wonderings, such as “I notice that” and “I see” for the noticing and “I am wondering why” and “I am wondering if” under the wondering column. The second worksheet did not have any sentence starters. After the gallery walk, the students were instructed to discuss at their tables, “Which image do you believe had the most impact and was the main reason for the Revolutionary War?” While one organizer was front loaded with sentence starters, it lacked high quality supports to push critical thinking. While students engaged in a table discussion, the question did not require students to elaborate on why they chose a particular image as having the most impact on the Revolutionary War, which would have allowed all students to engage in analyzing the evidence to support their images.
Additional Finding

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Standards and curriculum maps integrate the instructional shifts. Revisions to the curriculum are informed by an analysis of student data.

Impact

The curricula build coherence across grades and promote college and career readiness for all students including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities. Planning and revisions to the curricula allow cognitive engagement for students at their levels.

Supporting Evidence

- The school’s curricula incorporate academic vocabulary across all grades and content areas. As part of the Middle School Quality Initiative (MSQI), the school uses Word Gen to provide academic language that is used across disciplines. All teachers work with small groups three days a week to teach literacy as part of the MSQI. Reading and writing skills are developed through the Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). Literacy curriculum maps include text-based evidence to support informational and argumentative writing. Each unit of study includes key words, a time frame, a summary of the unit, mentor texts, essential questions, and the Common Core Standards aligned to the unit. GO Math! provides the curriculum for the development of sequential math skills across the grades.

- The Pearson science curriculum implemented across grades incorporates the New York State (NYS) standards. The arts curriculum provides opportunities for all students to participate in music and art aligned to the New York City Blueprint for the Arts. The school also provides students access to the arts through the Broadway Jr. Program. Passport for Social Studies provides units of study across grades aligned to the NYS standards. Students in grades six and seven have access to a technology lab, where they learn coding and robotics. Students in grade eight are participating in Algebra for All to support fluency development in math.

- A review of curriculum maps reflects that teachers are making revisions to support students at their instructional levels. For example, a review of math data by grade seven teachers revealed that students were struggling with proportional relationships. As a result, they added percent into unit 2 and expressions in unit 4, in order to correspond to the GO Math! curriculum and support students’ comprehension. They also modified a debits and credits task to include more rational numbers and removed another task because it was unclear if the students were to include the value in their responses.
Additional Finding

| Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, rubrics, and grading policies that are aligned to the school’s curricula. Unit tests, exit tickets, checklists, and self-reflections are common assessments used to determine students’ progress.

Impact

Teachers provide students with actionable feedback for their next steps. An analysis of data informs adjustments to the curriculum and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- Across the school, teachers use assessments such as rubrics, checklists, and the New York State summative evaluations in English Language Arts (ELA) and math to analyze students’ achievement across subject areas aligned to the Common Core Standards and the school’s curricula. An analysis of State data in math revealed that students are struggling with fluency and precision. In ELA, students have difficulty organizing and elaborating on text-based evidence to clarify their reasoning. A schoolwide grading policy ensures all student work is evaluated with the same requirements. For example, homework accounts for 5 percent of the grade, attendance and behavior account for 5 percent, classwork and formative assessment such as quizzes and assigned classwork account for 55 percent, and summative assessments such as projects and performance tasks account for 35 percent of a student’s grade. Rubric scores are aligned to the State’s four point measure of proficiency. Specifically, “exceeding expectations” aligns to a level 4 (a score of 95), “meeting expectations” aligns to a level 3 (85), “approaching expectations” aligns to a level 2 (70), and “below expectations” aligns to a level of 1 (65 and below).

- Feedback to students is shared through teacher conferences, comments on rubrics, and peer assessment. A review of feedback outlined what students were doing well and what they needed to do for their next steps. For example, on a Native American essay, the teacher commented, “Great job skillfully integrating the strategy of citing evidence and selecting the strongest piece of evidence to support your thesis statement.” The next steps stated, “Let’s work on closing by restating your thesis statement and summarizing your ideas.” Another example complimented the student for using multiple sources of evidence to support a claim. The next step required the student to check for grammatical mistakes so connections would be clear. In ELA, students use “Informational Learning Progression” rubrics to identify what they know and their next steps. For example, in word solving students indicate the strategies they know how to use to unlock the meaning of a word, such as context clues. The next step in developing word meaning may be replacing words with a synonym or with phrases that are similar and then checking to ensure that they make sense.

- Data from common assessments such as unit tests, exit tickets, quizzes, and the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) exam are used to make instructional adjustments and to modify the curricula. For example, an analysis of DRP scores in a grade seven ICT math class revealed that the majority of the students were reading below grade level while in the accelerated grade seven class the majority of the students were performing at or above grade level. As a result, grade seven teachers adjusted their instruction by adding a daily word problem for below grade level students. The curriculum was revised to help students develop a better understanding of percentages and ratios by aligning the sequence in the curriculum with the GO Math! program.
Additional Finding

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<tr>
<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, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Families participate in ongoing workshops and receive various forms of communications connected to a path of college and career readiness for their children.

Impact

Training provided to the staff supports accountability for schoolwide expectations. Families understand their children’s progress toward meeting expectations for college and career readiness skills.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal conducts daily morning meetings with the staff to share best practices and strategies, as well as upcoming events within the school. For example, during an observed meeting, the principal thanked the staff for all “you do to make Redwood Middle School an amazing school.” She reminded the staff to review student work and assessment data in order to drive their planning in preparation for upcoming assessments. Teachers were also reminded to keep their lesson plans along with materials in a folder on their desks. The “dropping the rope” positive intervention strategy, in which the teacher addresses inappropriate behavior at a different time, was shared as a way to manage the classroom environment and still hold students accountable. Teachers engaged in the discussion by sharing details of classroom visitations to observe peers using teaching strategies such as accountable talk. The principal emails the staff to memorialize prioritized items from the meetings.

- The administration conducts walkthroughs and provides feedback to teachers regarding their lessons. This includes the implementation of suggested next steps to support teachers’ being accountable for their own professional growth. In addition, the teachers participate in weekly professional development to support effective classroom practices such as Word Gen, an academic vocabulary program used across all classrooms as part of the implementation of MSQI. Coaches from TCRWP conduct training for developing writing and reading skills. Topics such as intentional scaffolds, protocols for kid talk, literacy in the content areas, and benchmark data analysis are included in the professional development plan to maintain high expectations across all grades and content areas.

- Families participate in workshops to support their understanding of college and career readiness. At the beginning of the school year, all parents and guardians are invited to a Back-to-School curriculum night. The faculty and administration share expectations for students to be prepared for the next grade, aligned to the Common Core Standards and supportive of college and career readiness. A two-part series was offered to parents to promote social-emotional interactions entitled “Self and Other: About Yourself and Those with whom You Interact.” Parents shared that throughout the school year they receive phone calls from their children’s teachers to make them aware of academic and social concerns. Parents receive two interim progress reports to keep them informed about their children’s performance in between regular report cards. They also have access to online information through PupilPath, where they can track their children’s progress. Daily phone messages are sent to the homes of students who are late and absent. The guidance counselor conducts orientation workshops for parents to prepare students for high school. Career Day is held yearly for all students and families.
Additional Finding

### Quality Indicator:
4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development

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<th>Proficient</th>
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#### Findings
The majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributed leadership structures are in place across the school.

#### Impact
Collaborative inquiry strengthens teachers’ instructional capacity. Teachers share their voices with the administration in schoolwide decisions, which builds leadership capacity.

#### Supporting Evidence

- All teachers participate in vertical and grade wide teams. Vertical teams meet as a department once a week, and grade bands meet one to two times a week. Teams meet to engage in lesson plan studies as well as in an analysis of student work and data. Specific protocols guide how teachers engage in inquiry. For example, teams use the formalized “Tuning Protocol” and “Looking at Student Work Protocol” as they participate in the inquiry process. Minutes from the meetings for all teams are uploaded on Google Drive so that all staff have access to strategies that have proven successful across the school.

- During the ELA Department inquiry meeting, the teachers engaged in looking at students’ argumentative writing. The session started with a focus on grade six. The teachers shared their noticing of students’ writing samples and highlighted that while many students were using graphic organizers, the organization of their writing was not always clear to the reader. Another noticing was the absence of elaboration to support a claim. Strategies to support more fluent and detailed writing included using exemplars to highlight elaboration of evidence, providing sentence starters, and working with students in small groups. Another strategy was to focus on using one part of the graphic organizer to develop a more cohesive flow within the essay. All of the teachers shared that they will create lessons on argumentative writing structures to support their students in organizing their evidence to include more elaboration of the details in their essays.

- Collaborative decision making between the staff and administration is ongoing within the school. The administration conducts bi-weekly cabinet meetings with grade and department leaders. Teachers shared that they feel their voices are heard and addressed in decisions that impact the school. For example, there was consensus that students were not doing well with the math program they were using. As a result, different programs were researched and together the staff and administration decided to change to the current math program. Another collaborative decision was the implementation of the PBIS and Restorative Circle programs to support students’ social and emotional needs. Teachers who meet with the administration engage in discussions specific to their grade or content area and share the data outcomes on Google Drive.